

OBAMA'S ODDS ■ TURKS & CONSEQUENCES ■ IRRELIGIOUS REVIVAL

NOVEMBER 5, 2007

# The American Conservative

## Myth of the OIL WEAPON



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## AMERICA THE OBLIVIOUS

In the Oct. 8 issue, one of your Fourteen Days items described a photo of German guards and staff at Auschwitz enjoying their leisure—young women giggling with an accordionist, untouched by the death around them.

It made me think of George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Condoleezza Rice, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz et al., who strut about, oblivious to the death and destruction they have caused.

We don't keep track of the number of civilians killed since we invaded Iraq, but it is probably several hundred thousand. We do know that the Iraqi populace as a whole has suffered grievously: millions have sought refuge in Syria and Jordan; millions more have lost their homes and are refugees within their own country. We go into national mourning when 30 some students are gunned down at Virginia Tech, but more Iraqis are killed most every day—husbands, wives, children. These are real people, not merely statistics.

When we occupied Iraq, we did away with the existing organizations for maintaining order. We therefore assumed responsibility. And we have failed mightily.

This doesn't seem to bother President Bush as he entertains on his ranch while an Iraqi woman who has lost her husband and home sits in the desert with her 10 dirty, hungry children. The president, after all, has to protect his country. And as Rumsfeld observed, "Stuff happens."

ROBERT CHARRON

*Lost City, W.V.*

## ON EGYPT'S SHOULDERS

Fred Reed's article "The Unbound West" (Oct. 5) and Hugh Mc Innish's reply, "Western Voltage," warrant a reply.

Technological advancements in human history can be compared to a relay race. It was Newton who stated

that he "stood on the shoulders of giants," meaning the ancient Egyptians, as he put in his *Principia Mathematica*. He was right: George Sarton—the well-known historian of science who examined the Edwin Smith papyrus, the world's earliest medical document, and its methodological instructions on how to conduct surgery on the human body—argued that empirical science began in Egypt. All credit is due to researchers like Maxwell, Planck, Bohr, and others for their efforts in modern science, but it must be recognized that without the concept of measurement, numbers, and empirical observation, their work would not have been possible. Ancient Egypt and Sumer are the shoulders here.

Note, too, that most of the technological inventions of the Greeks took place in Alexandria and not Athens (the seat of the arts), and figures like Euclid and Heron were Egyptian-born. Furthermore, Renaissance science in Europe was to a large extent carried on according to the neo-Egyptian tradition of Hermeticism—a paradigm to which researchers like Bruno and Newton subscribed.

So the argument that inventiveness is a purely Western characteristic is questionable. After all, Europeans have lived in Europe for the last 45,000 years, and it is only in the last 600 that reading and writing were introduced to Europe's heartland.

L. KEITA

*Via e-mail*

## POPULAR FRONT

Thank you for your intelligent, diverse, and courageous contemplation of ideas and events. I am not aware of a print journal that seems, so consistently and reasonably, to defy conventional codes of political correctness. Your ink is ferociously refreshing.

I was raised in an Eisenhower-era, educated, "conservative," working-class

family in central California. I am now a self-educated, working class, "conservative liberal" in eastern Washington, living in an era typified by an enormity of abnormality—of the social, economic, and political culture.

I'm presently in a study group reading *Das Kapital* and am embroiled in a what amounts to a workers' rights struggle with the management of our local low-power FM community radio station. I'm also involved in a campaign to provide public funding for elections. So I suppose I'm what most would call a "leftist." I'm also a "godless atheist." And yet your magazine gleams in my gaze. Clearly, labels tend to be more often confusing than edifying.

In reading the Oct. 8 issue, I was pleased to find not only James Howard Kunstler's "Slip Sliding Away," excoriating the infantile state of American culture, but a whole issue that seemed even more iconoclastic than usual. A culture of denial, irresponsibility, blame, and general selfishness stomps the land, in proverbial ten-league boots.

We the people, and nation, of America need to stop arrogantly minding other nations' business, we must, with the utmost attention, begin to mind our own. Kunstler asked, "Are we building a society with a future? [or does this culture] ... yearn for destruction? ... I think we are in trouble."

I share that worry, and was surprised to find it in *TAC*, but would have been more surprised to find it published in anyone else's journal.

DAN TREECRAFT

*Spokane, Wash.*

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[IRAN]

## FOOL ME TWICE

Hillary Clinton has drawn her share of flak for submitting to what should properly be named the Iran War Enabling Act, but she had plenty of company. The Kyl-Lieberman resolution, declaring Iran's 125,000-member Revolutionary Guard a "terrorist organization," passed the Senate last month by a 76-22 vote. The initial resolution called for a "roll back" of the Iranian menace to Iraq, which seemed to some Democrats too blatant a green light for war. The version that eventually passed includes a catchall threat against Lebanon's Hezbollah (any foe of Israel must be an enemy of America!) and condemned Iran's purported "destabilizing" of Iraq. Bush and Cheney now have the congressional justification they need to proclaim in coming speeches that Iran is a nation of terrorists.

The Democratic senators who voted for the resolution claim that it was designed to strengthen President Bush's hand in diplomacy. But there are now no ongoing talks with Iran, and none are scheduled. The language the administration is using—General Petraeus recently called Iran's ambassador to Iraq a member of the Quds Force—is designed to shut down diplomacy.

One can accept that Cheney wants war and that Bush probably does as well. But what of the Democrats? Why, after seeing the debacle that followed their enabling act of 2002, did the Senate vote for war against Iran? Noting the cowardice of the party, Yale Professor David Bromwich wrote, "The consequences of their failure to draw down the war after November 2006 just don't seem to strike them. When in doubt, they revert to social-democratic family values, as if prescription drugs were a suitable antidote to torture, massacre, and the destruction of cities."



JEFF BAGLEY WWW.CAGECARTOONS.COM

[BUDGET]

## PENNY-WISE GOP

Conservatives hate the prospect of universal healthcare almost as much as they hate the thought of Hillary delivering it. So they took comfort in President Bush's veto of a \$35-billion increase in funding for the State Children's Health Insurance Program. (Tactically, it was a bad move: the perception that poor children are going untreated is a sure way to turn public sympathy in Mrs. Clinton's favor.)

But Freepers in full lather don't come with long views—or long memories. For just two weeks before, the president now applauded for his fiscal restraint had requested \$190 billion—atop the \$502 billion already spent—for his bottomless war on terror. Spreading freedom costs us about \$12 billion per month. Multiply that by 12 for an annual total of \$144 billion. Hillarycare would cost \$110 billion per year. Turns out Big Government is a bargain compared to Big War.

Republicans can't afford to do that math, but Democrats are taking note. During the recent budget battle, Congressman Dave Obey said, "I would suggest that restoring \$16 billion in presidential cuts is mighty small potatoes compared to the \$200 billion he wants us to spend in Iraq." Fair point.

The Dems are no models of fiscal discipline—sending the national debt over the \$9-trillion mark was a joint venture—but we're approaching a point no conservative could have conceived a

generation ago. While their motives are unrelated to penny pinching, more Democrats than Republicans regularly vote against reckless spending. That's a feat only a conservative of George W. Bush's caliber could have accomplished.

[ELECTION]

## CONSTITUTION OPTIONAL

Pundits like to invent tests for presidential aspirants: Can the candidate pass the gravitas test? The experience test? How about basic civics?

In the most recent GOP debate, the candidates were asked a simple yes or no: "Would you need to go to Congress to get authorization to take military action against Iran's nuclear facilities?" Mitt Romney dissembled: "You sit down with your attorneys and [they] tell you what you have to do." Duncan Hunter began, "It depends..." then gamed out a unilateral American attack on Tehran. Mike Huckabee sought refuge in a nonanswer: "A president has to do whatever is necessary."

With Ron Paul came clarity—and the loudest applause of the afternoon: "Absolutely. ... Why don't we just open up the Constitution and read it? You're not allowed to go to war without a declaration of war."

A party that once prided itself on competence in foreign affairs and fidelity to the Founders' vision has fallen a long way when only one of its candidates can manage to say that he will honor his oath.

[CULTURE]

## PORNO-FASCISM

In the last GOP debate, Rudy Giuliani announced that as president he would wipe porn, sexual predators, and general bawdiness from the Internet. He proposed a “task force between the federal government and state and local governments in order to police [the Internet], to share information, to make sure it isn’t being misused, to make sure it’s protected.” Rudy means it. As mayor of New York, he not only kicked the prostitutes out of Times Square, but banned dancing at bars not licensed by the city.

His comments reflect a certain political calculus. With Southern primaries looming, Giuliani is reaching out to conservative Christians who might otherwise gravitate toward candidates who aren’t thrice married and estranged from their children. Indeed, as a gay-rights advocate who claimed that *Roe v. Wade* was “OK,” Rudy is content to confine his culture war to Internet smut.

But his words evince little respect for parental authority—not to mention cultural conservatism. If existing agencies weren’t “getting control over it,” he wouldn’t rule out creating a new Internet regulatory institution modeled on the FCC. Conservatives might rally around the mayor’s “law-and-order” credentials and his condemnation of online trash, but they should note that when Rudy talks of building an ethical, healthy culture, he thinks immediately of expanding the Nanny State.

[ECONOMICS]

## FAITH-BASED TRADE

National Public Radio billed the news as a “loss of faith”—an unusual opening for an economics piece, but not a surprising one given the mystical hocus pocus that has long buttressed free-trade ideology.

According to a story that first appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*, 6 of

10 Republican voters agreed that free trade had been bad for the U.S. and would vote for candidates who favor limits on foreign imports.

This is hardly shocking. The manufacturing jobs that pulled the working class up into the comfortable middle are vanishing, and the bipartisan elite that views the wisdom of globalization as a no-brainer is not receiving its customary deference. The poll tells a tale: 59 percent of Republicans now believe that imports “cost jobs here at home.”

We’re all for faith in its place, but in this realm, we’re happy to see reason reassert its claims.

[MEDIA]

## IF DUBYA CAN BE PRESIDENT...

*Commentary* has announced a changing of the guard: in a year’s time, John Podhoretz, son of Midge and Norman, will replace Neal Kozodoy as editor. The magazine is arguably the original source of neoconservatism. *TAC* writers and editors have published there and continued to respect the publication even after they came, eventually, to disagree with much of what it said. It is unlikely anyone who worked with him didn’t come away with the highest opinion of Kozodoy.

J-Pod, as he is known, is the author of *Bush Country*, a work that depicts how Americans love their decisive warrior president, and one of the lesser books attacking Hillary Clinton. He is an active participant in *National Review*’s website, attempting to police its contributors for various political deviations, usually of a paleocon variety. While journalists no longer refer to him as J.P. Nor-manson, it is doubtful anyone seriously imagines that J-Pod can fill the shoes of his father, editor of the magazine for 35 years, or of Kozodoy. But perhaps *Commentary*’s loss will be *National Review*’s gain. ■

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[peaceful pipeline]

# The Myth of the Oil Weapon

Our foreign-policy establishment believes the U.S. must intervene to keep oil flowing from the Mideast. In reality, all America needs to do is demand it.

By David R. Henderson

IN A RECENT INTERVIEW with Charlie Rose to drum up publicity for his book, *The Age of Turbulence*, former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan argued that the reason to make war on Iraq was that an unchecked Saddam Hussein would have threatened the world's oil supply. Greenspan gave no evidence or argument for his assertion. But in making it, he confirmed the views of many opponents of the war, and even some supporters, that the Iraq War was, or at least should have been, about oil. He also joined a long list of prominent people who have made the case for war for oil ever since the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries formed an effective cartel that raised the world price from \$3 a barrel to \$11 in the fall of 1973.

That's too bad, because the case for making war for oil is profoundly weak. The pragmatic case against war for oil, on the other hand, rests on a few simple facts. First, no oil-producing country, no matter what it does to its oil supply, can cause us to line up for gasoline. Second, an oil-producing country cannot impose a selective embargo on a target country, because oil is sold in a world market. Third, the only way one country's government can hurt another country using the "oil weapon" is by cutting output,

which hurts all oil consumers, not just the target country; helps all oil producers, friend and foe alike; and harms the country that cuts its output.

Consider how long the foreign-policy establishment has taken as accepted the idea that the U.S. government needs to use military force to keep the world's oil supply flowing. In March 1975, *Harper's* published an article, "Seizing Arab Oil," authored by "Miles Ignotus." The author's name, *Harper's* explained, "is the pseudonym of a Washington-based professor and defense consultant with intimate links to high-level U.S. policy makers." Many insiders speculated that the piece was written by Edward Luttwak, still a prominent military analyst. In it, the author expressed frustration at the high price of oil and argued that no nonviolent means of breaking the cartel's back would work. Even massive conservation, he argued, was unlikely to solve the problem. Moreover, he claimed, "there is absolutely no reason to expect major new discoveries." So what options were left? "Ignotus" wrote, "There remains only force. The only feasible countervailing power to OPEC's control of oil is power itself—military power." He argued at the time that military force should be exerted on Saudi Arabia.

That article, though one of the most articulate, was far from the only call for an American invasion of a Middle East oil country. Of course, no such attack occurred in the 1970s. But this kind of extreme thinking made respectable the idea that the U.S. government should seriously consider invading countries in the Persian Gulf to drive down the price or assure the supply of oil.

On Jan. 1, 1975, just two months before the *Harper's* article appeared, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger stated that military force should not be used "in the case of a dispute over price," but should be considered "where there is some actual strangulation of the industrialized world." In May of that year, Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger made further threatening noises.

In 1977, President Jimmy Carter issued an order for the U.S. military to start a Rapid Deployment Force to give the United States the ability to quickly send a substantial invasion force to various parts of the world. After the fall of the Shah of Iran in 1979, the Rapid Deployment Force became focused on the Persian Gulf. In 1983, during the Reagan administration's tenure, this force became known as U.S. Central Command.

Its cost, even in years of relative peace, has been high. Although the U.S. government tends to hide the cost of various programs, making it hard for economists, let alone average citizens, to discern, one analyst, Earl Ravenal, estimated the fiscal year 1985 budget for CENTCOM at \$59 billion, \$47 billion of which, he claimed, was for the Persian Gulf alone. That amounted to a full 1 percent of GDP. In today's dollars, that's \$89 billion.

This was only the beginning of serious U.S. planning for an invasion of the Middle East over oil. In January 1980, after the Soviets had invaded Afghanistan the previous month, President Carter, in his State of the Union address, announced the "Carter Doctrine," which stated:

Let our position be absolutely clear: An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.

A decade later, the U.S. initiated the first Gulf War, at least partly over oil. President Bush stated that his military action was, among other things, about "access to energy resources that are key ... to the entire world." He claimed that if Saddam Hussein had gotten greater control of oil reserves in the Middle East, he would have been able to threaten "our jobs" and "our way of life." Secretary of State James A. Baker III claimed that Saddam Hussein, by controlling much of the world's oil, "could strangle the global economic order, determining by fiat whether we all enter a recession, or even the darkness of a depression." And the ever-present Henry Kissinger wrote that an unchecked Saddam Hussein would be able to "cause a worldwide economic crisis."

Yet the advocates of war for oil have never confronted some basic realities. Economists often get a bad rap for their pessimism, but an understanding of how oil markets work leads to optimism about a secure oil supply.

When many Americans over age 50 worry about Middle Eastern producers playing havoc with the world oil supply, they think back to the gasoline lines of 1973 and 1979. But those fiascos weren't forced by a foreign producer. The U.S. government was responsible. President Nixon had imposed a freeze on all prices on Aug. 15, 1971. He gradually decontrolled prices, but when OPEC raised the price in the fall of 1973, Nixon's price controls prevented the price of oil and gasoline from rising sufficiently. Whatever else economists may argue about, they agree that a price control that keeps the price below what would have otherwise existed in a competitive market will cause a shortage. The reason is that at a price below the competitive price, consumers will demand more and producers will supply less. President Ford and Congress altered the price controls, and President Carter inherited and kept them. When the world oil supply tightened again in 1979, we had another shortage. Simply by refraining from controlling the price, therefore, we can avoid, and have avoided, gas lines.

To say that a reduction in the supply of oil cannot cause a shortage is not to say that it cannot cause harm. Any country that is a net importer of a good will be harmed by the higher price if the supply of that good falls. But the key is that the supply must fall. If supply does not fall, nothing important changes.

Imagine that the government of Country A currently sells oil to people in Country B and wishes to harm people in Country B by refusing to sell or by reducing sales. What happens next depends crucially on whether Country A

cuts its own oil production. Assume that Country A maintains production. This means that Country A must look around for people in other countries to sell the suddenly freed-up oil to. Here's where it gets interesting.

In 2006, the five most important exporters of oil to the United States, in order of importance, were Canada, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, Nigeria, and Iraq. Total imports from these countries were 59 percent of U.S. imports. Of these five, the one most likely to want to hurt the United States is Venezuela or, more accurately, Venezuela's government under Hugo Chavez. But interestingly, Chavez has done the exact opposite, actually subsidizing oil imports to the northeastern United States. But imagine the worst: imagine that Chavez wanted to target the United States using the "oil weapon." Say he cuts sales by half to 753,000 barrels a day. The U.S. will respond by scrambling to find other sources of oil. Where will it find them? Let's go back to Chavez. He needs to find people in other countries to sell this 753,000 barrels a day to. Let's say he ships the oil to buyers in China. Then those buyers in China will find that they want to buy 753,000 fewer barrels from their suppliers, say Iraq or Saudi Arabia. Presto! The American buyers' problems are solved because they can get their 753,000 barrels elsewhere. In short, when the government of one country tries to selectively target people in another country, but still wishes to maintain output, it can't succeed. The selective "oil weapon" is a dud. It's like a game of musical chairs with the same number of chairs as players. The game would be awfully boring, which is why it is not played that way. But in the case of international trade, boring is good.

It is unlikely that the government of Venezuela or of any country would maintain output simply by selling the



freed-up supply to people in only one other country. It is also unlikely that people in the targeted country would get supplies from producers in only two other countries. But that complication doesn't change the conclusion.

Also, one main reason for the particular pattern of oil exports and imports is transportation cost: if you're in New Orleans, why buy from Iran when the cost of shipping from Venezuela is much lower? It follows, therefore, that when a country's government disrupts this pattern by cutting off oil supplies to a nearby country, transportation costs rise. The higher transportation cost acts as an excise tax, the burden of which is typically shared by the buyers and sellers. The disrupting government would be hurt by having to accept a somewhat lower price from a more distant buyer. The people in the disrupted country would be hurt by having to pay a somewhat higher transportation cost to get

almost all the world's oil is produced by governments.) But any government that wants to hurt a particular country by reducing its oil supply faces three huge problems.

First, an oil producer cannot single out particular countries or consumers to hurt. If one oil producer cuts supply, then, all other things being equal, the world oil supply drops and prices rise. All oil consumers are hurt, and their hurt is proportional to the amount of oil they use. Thus the "oil weapon" is an incredibly blunt instrument that, when used, will hurt friend and foe alike.

Second, the oil-producing country, by cutting output, will cause the world price of oil to rise, which will help other oil-producing countries that don't reduce their supply. So for example, if Iran's government chooses to reduce its supply of oil to hurt the United States, it also helps its avowed enemy, Saudi Arabia.

set to watch TV; he steals a TV to fence it. Similarly, an oil thief wants to steal oil to sell it.

Nevertheless, imagine that Saddam Hussein, wanting to hurt the United States, had cut output by 1 mbd. (You have to use your imagination here because Saddam was a U.S. ally.) This would have been 23 percent of 4.3 mbd, but only 1.7 percent of world output. Let's bias the analysis in favor of a large hurt on the United States and a small hurt on Saddam by assuming the inelastic end of the range of economists' estimates of the short-run elasticity of demand for oil, an elasticity of 0.1. This would mean that every 1 percent reduction in output would cause a 10 percent increase in price. Therefore, a 1.7 percent reduction in output would have caused a 17 percent increase in price, raising the world price from about \$20 a barrel to about \$23.40. The harm to the United States, which was importing about 8 mbd at the time, would have been \$27 million a day, or \$9.9 billion a year. At the time, this would have less than 0.2 percent of GDP. Note also that even with this \$3.40 per barrel increase, Saddam Hussein would have accrued less revenue than he would have if he had not cut output at all. He would have brought in \$77 million a day, or \$28.2 billion a year. But had he not cut output, he would have brought in \$86 million a day, or \$32.4 billion a year.

It's true that by producing less, Saddam would have had lower costs, so let's bias the analysis in favor of his getting a gain from cutting output by assuming that the cost of oil production for the last 1 mbd was \$5 per barrel, a number that most observers would regard as being on the high side. Then his cut in output would have saved him \$5 million a day. So he would have given up \$9 million a day in revenue to save \$5 million a day, which would not have been a good deal for him. In short, there

**IF ONE OIL PRODUCER CUTS SUPPLY, THEN, ALL OTHER THINGS BEING EQUAL, THE WORLD OIL SUPPLY DROPS AND PRICES RISE. ALL OIL CONSUMERS ARE HURT, AND THEIR HURT IS PROPORTIONAL TO THE AMOUNT OF OIL THEY USE.**

their oil. But the maximum hurt in either case would be no more than the difference in transport costs, and this would be a small amount, probably under \$1 per barrel. For the hypothetical 753,000-barrel production cut, therefore, the maximum hurt to U.S. consumers would be \$753,000 a day or \$275 million a year—less than \$1 per year per U.S. resident.

Of course, the government of an oil-producing country can do substantial harm to the people of another country by cutting the amount of oil it produces and sells. (I use the word "government" here on purpose because outside Canada, the United States, and Britain,

Third and finally, to continue with the weapon analogy, the oil weapon blows up in its user's face. Specifically, any country that produces less than about 10 percent of the world supply will find that the price increase it gets will not compensate for the reduction in revenues due to lower production.

Consider the case of Saddam Hussein in 1990. When he took over Kuwait, he controlled oil production of 4.3 million barrels per day in a 60 mbd market. His motive for taking over Kuwait was probably not, as Kissinger, Baker, and Bush I feared, to cut output and increase the price at all, but simply to have more oil to sell. A thief does not steal a television



is good reason to think that if Saddam was as ruthless as he appeared to be, he would have wanted to cut output by less than 1 mbd, or maybe not at all.

It goes without saying that 1 mbd is less than 4.3 mbd. Therefore, the estimated damage from the hypothetical 1- mbd cut in oil output by Saddam Hussein is well below the actual damage done to the United States by the United Nations' 1990-91 restrictions on output from Iraq and Kuwait, restrictions for which the U.S. government was a key instigator.

Moreover, even these estimates of hurt are overstated. Why? Because producers in other countries do not sit passively by when the price of oil rises. When the price increases, producers produce more, in part because sources of supply that weren't worth exploiting at the previous lower price are worth tapping at a higher price. This increased production moderates the price increase from a given producer's cut in output, further limiting the damage that can be done to countries that are net importers of oil.

In 1776, Adam Smith wrote in *The Wealth of Nations*, "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner but from their regard for their own self-interest." Similarly, it is not due to the benevolence of the world's oil suppliers that we get our oil but from their regard for their own interests. Our oil supply is secure, not because our government threatens to use force against those who would make it insecure but because the world's oil suppliers want to make money. ■

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An Oct. 13 *New York Times* front-page story claiming American and foreign intelligence confirmation that the Israeli strike on Syria last month was on a nuclear reactor being constructed with North Korean aid was based on misleading information leaked by Elliott Abrams and Stephen Hadley at the National Security Council. Other than Hadley and Abrams, there were no other American sources for the *Times's* account.

There is no American satellite photography indicating that the area bombed was a nuclear site. Moreover, U.S. satellites and ground collector facilities did not detect any radiation emissions following the bombing, something that would have resulted if uranium or plutonium was actually present. A CIA briefing of the Senate Appropriations Committee on Oct. 8 concluded that the intelligence community has nothing that points to a Syrian nuclear program. The Israeli information on the alleged Syrian nuclear site is not being shared with most of the U.S. intelligence community to avoid provoking negative responses.

Some senior officials in the Bush administration are worried about the media campaign directed by Vice President Dick Cheney and carried out by Abrams and Hadley trying to link North Korea to a Syrian nuclear program. Based solely on Israeli-provided evidence, Cheney appears to actually believe that North Korea is helping the Syrians establish a nuclear program, and he has discounted the skepticism of the CIA. There is high-level concern over how decisions regarding Israeli and U.S. operations directed against Syria and Iran are being made and how key officials at Defense and State are being bypassed. Cheney is alleged to be directing the campaign from an underground operations center on the grounds of the Naval Observatory in Washington, where the vice president's official residence is located. Cheney regularly remains underground, staying in contact through secure video conferencing, while his official motorcade proceeds to the White House each day as if he were in it.

An Israeli source has revealed that the Syrian raid was intended as a warning to the Iranians that Israel is fully capable of penetrating sophisticated air defenses. That was a likely consequence, but the real purpose of the incursion was to gather intelligence on a new anti-aircraft radar system being installed by Russia in both Syria and Iran. The system is called a synthetic aperture radar array. Forcing the Syrians to turn on their radar systems in response to an overflight is a way to test the effectiveness and characteristics of the system, but the Syrians apparently did not co-operate precisely because they feared that the Israelis would acquire valuable intelligence. The Israeli strike was conducted in co-ordination with the Pentagon, which is also concerned about the effectiveness of the new air defenses if there is an American attack on Iran.

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# Secular Fundamentalists

Can atheists form a movement around shared disbelief?

By Michael Brendan Dougherty

THE KEYNOTE SPEAKER at the Crystal Clear Atheism Conference is making the audience uncomfortable: "It seems to me that we are consenting to be viewed as a cranky subculture," warns Sam Harris, author of the anti-religion best-seller *The End of Faith*. "We don't want to be viewed as a marginal interest group that meets in hotel ballrooms." The Crowne Plaza crowd squirms, but Harris is undeterred.

"We should not call ourselves atheists," he continues. "We should not call ourselves secularists. We should not call ourselves humanists, or secular humanists, or naturalists, or skeptics, or anti-theists, or rationalists, or freethinkers, or brights. We should not call ourselves anything." Naming next year's conference could be difficult.

Then again, there may not be a sequel if Harris has his way: "We should go under the radar—for the rest of our lives. And while there, we should be decent, responsible people who destroy bad ideas wherever we find them."

That's disheartening counsel for atheists who, after years of disbelieving alone, find themselves in the midst of a revival. Ninety percent of Americans claim to believe in God, church attendance is higher than in any other Western nation, and political leaders still invoke divine blessing at the end of major addresses. But in the past three years, six books touting atheism have reached the *New York Times's* bestseller list. Features in *Newsweek*, a fawning *Nation* cover, and endless TV appearances followed.

Forty years after *Time* asked, "Is God Dead?" atheism is getting a new hearing. Its proponents are eminent—Oxford scientist Richard Dawkins, journalist Christopher Hitchens, philosopher Daniel Dennett—and its polemics are fierce: in the post-9/11 world, religion is no longer a fantasy to be ignored but a threat to be vanquished.

Grassroots unbelievers, newly emboldened, are forming lobbying groups and staging demonstrations, hoping to blend lonely cries to "*Écrasez l'infâme*" into a mighty chorus.

Like all movements, they hold conferences. But they didn't gather to hear that atheists should "go under the radar." Being part of a "cranky subculture" is half the fun.

Down the hall from the ballroom is a makeshift store selling books with screeching titles like *The God Delusion* and bumper stickers that read "Have you found Jesus? Don't tell me he's lost again" or "Abstinence Makes the Church Grow Fondlers." Young men with haircuts fit for their mothers' basements wear t-shirts that say "Don't Pray in My School and I Won't Think in Your Church." The pleasure of sticking an evolved thumb in the eyes of the Ned Flanders of the world seems to be a primary attraction of atheism.

This gathering of Atheists Alliance International has everything a conference of the like-minded should: a fundraising dinner, a roster of celebrity authors (who will be signing their books), a little music, and films that fit the conference's worldview. Instead of

"The Passion of the Christ," this weekend features Monty Python's "The Life of Brian" and the Dawkins-produced documentary on religion, "The Root of All Evil." There are breakout sessions on the politics of the Religious Right, creationism, and "secular parenting."

The atheists even have their own dippy hostess, Margaret Downey, president of AAI, who tosses out globe-shaped koosh balls to the audience. The shoulder pads of her suit inhibit her throwing, but nothing can restrain her smile. Her introduction is insistently cheerful: "Atheist Alliance International has gathered together speakers who are not only extraordinary in their respective fields but who exemplify the atheist life-stance." A man close to me raises his eyebrows, "Life-stance?"

Moments of doubt are common, even among atheists. Harris's keynote speech occasions many. Though he peppers it with the usual cribbed-from-Voltaire insults against the pious, his call to drop the words "atheist" and "secular" makes the audience visibly uncomfortable. He goes on to denounce the easy out non-believers take in treating all religion equally: "Christians often complain that atheists, and the secular world generally, balance every criticism of Muslim extremism with a mention of Christian extremism. Our Christian neighbors, even the craziest of them, are right to be outraged by this pretense of even-handedness because the truth is that Islam is quite a bit scarier and more culpable for needless human misery than Christianity has been for a very, very long

time. And the world must wake up to this fact.”

People came to be entertained with jokes about pedophile priests and to be encouraged in their moral struggle with prudes and prigs. Harris is gumming it all up with politics. Worse, to many it seems he’s sneaking religion in through the backdoor. “While I always use terms like ‘spiritual’ and ‘mystical’ in scare quotes, and take some pains to denude them of metaphysics,” he says, “the e-mail I receive from my brothers and sisters in arms suggests that many of you find my interest in these topics problematic.”

Harris suggests that atheists need to do better in the philosophy of life department. Pointing to contemplative traditions within those hated religions, he asks whether atheists can provide an account of human happiness “not contingent upon our merely reiterating our pleasures and successes and avoiding our pains.” He speculates about the mindset of someone who “holes himself up in a cave, or in a monastery, for months or years,” stating that many have improved their ethical intuition by these practices.

This sends a murmur through the crowd, and when Q & A time comes, Daniel Dennett stands up. He jokes that the case for intense contemplation would be more persuasive “if these people ever came back with something interesting.” The audience laughs, but Dennett ruins the light mood with a confession. He’s been experimenting with transcendental meditation in the Brook-Farm style. After only one night together, the leaders of unbelief are exposed as potential monks and mystics.

While Harris comes perilously close to validating the existence of religious experience, Hitchens embodies that older, more romantic, tradition of impiety that comes close to acknowledging the existence of God then raises its

fist—a finite gesture of rebellion against an infinite tyranny. He is a self-proclaimed “anti-theist.”

Hitchens entry into anti-religion polemics came in 1995, with the publication of his book on Mother Teresa, *The Missionary Position*. His latest foray into organized disbelief is the bestselling *god is not Great*. For Hitchens, religion is “a plagiarism of a plagiarism of a hearsay of a hearsay, of an illusion of an illusion, extending all the way back to a fabrication of a few non-events.” Tossing the crowd a little red meat—and being famous apart from his criticism of religion—makes Hitchens the conference rock star.

Out on the hotel balcony, a young man wearing a pinstriped jacket with a Union Jack sewn into the shoulder smokes a cigarette. Implying that there could be consequences if he reveals his name, he talks about his Bible-belt upbringing: “Down there the Baptists will even come to your door on Sunday and ask you to come to church with them.” Horrors. Pointing to his friend he notes, “Between

was coated in pink and torn apart.” Now he has found his footing in the uncreated world.

But apparently denying God’s existence doesn’t preclude idol worship: “I got to smoke with Christopher Hitchens! And talk about religion. He had to go to the bathroom and asked me if I would mind continuing the conversation while he went.” Beaming, he says, “it was probably the coolest moment of my life.”

For those convinced that atheism itself is becoming a religion, the conference provides plenty of evidence. It resembles an evangelical retreat weekend—and not just because the teens in attendance seemed thrilled with the prospect of little supervision and empty hotel rooms. Attendees are encouraged to vote on an appropriate symbol of atheism. They include versions of the letter A that look like the symbol for anarchy and a circle with the bizarre Greek formulation “atheos.” The same table displays pamphlets with quick arguments on behalf of the godless, helpful for reverse proselytism.

### HARRIS ASKS WHETHER **ATHEISTS** CAN PROVIDE AN **ACCOUNT OF HUMAN HAPPINESS** “NOT CONTINGENT UPON OUR **MERELY REITERATING OUR PLEASURES AND SUCCESSES AND AVOIDING OUR PAINS.**”

the two of us, we couldn’t count 20 atheists in our school.” That public institution, he says, threatened him for giving a fellow student a copy of Dawkins’s *God Delusion*—“They said it could bring a lawsuit.” With some embarrassment, he reveals that, until a year ago, he was a fundamentalist Christian.

Then, all of 17, he took his copy of the Bible and attacked it with a highlighter: “I went through and marked every passage that contradicted science, or history or any other part of the Bible.” He kicks some ash by his feet. “By the end it

Just like evangelicals, atheists are anxious to give second careers to D-list celebrities. Julie Sweeney, a “Saturday Night Live” alum, is a monologist—not to be confused with monotheist—who has produced a dramatic soliloquy called “Letting Go of God.” She recounts dating a man who believed in Intelligent Design and thought that her eyes, the ones he so enjoyed gazing into, were created in heaven. A nice thought, she admits, before hectoring about evolution and how there are “flaws” in the human eye. I bet she’s fun on dates.

The unfaithful also seem determined to make the evangelical war on popular music (in the form of Christian rock) a two-front battle. Greydon Square is the stage name of the irreligious rapper, Eddie Collins. Hailing from Compton, Square assaults religion with an arsenal of West-Coast gangsta beats. His head swings forward and back: "I'm still the black Carl Sagan / Exposing the fraud of Christianity, that's all pagan." And his boasts don't end with comparing himself to scientists: "I'm the Malcolm X of Atheism / By any means necessary take it to 'em." In an apparent nod to authenticity, the Gandhi of impiety was recently detained by Arizona police.

If this kitsch falls short as an anti-apologetic, it's meant to. The *Guardian* commented, "The new atheists loathe

enunciates an ordinary fact about the world in which we live. Certain beliefs place their adherents beyond the reach of every peaceful means of persuasion. ... There is, in fact, no talking to some people." The Inquisition at least allowed defendants the chance to recant—often many chances. But for Harris, in a nuclear age, the creeds of foreigners constitute an actionable threat. He keeps the Crusades but dumps St. Augustine and just-war theory in favor of the Bush doctrine.

The question of children preoccupies Richard Dawkins. Using a PowerPoint presentation, the Oxford don displays a photo that appeared around Christmas of three children. The caption designates them "a Christian," "a Jew," and "a Muslim." He changes the labels to "a

parent who might say, "They just do. I don't know. Now, how many times must I say it's bedtime"?

While Dawkins claims that religious parents "deny their children the universe," in another workshop the unbelievers work hard to make sure their kids deny anything beyond it. That can be a challenge. Julie Sweeney's contribution to the book *Parenting Beyond Belief* includes this vignette about her daughter: "One day we were walking home from the park with one of her friends, and the friend said, 'Did you see your grandfather's spirit fly up to heaven when he died?' And my daughter looked at me and said, 'Did it?' And I said, 'No, we don't believe in things like that.' And my daughter parroted me. ... And for a second she looked confident repeating me, and then her face crinkled up and she frowned and directed her eyes downward."

By the last day of the conference, the atheists seem to have run out of energy. There are no more entertainers or high-powered authors to see. While most of the impious search for coffee, a final workshop gears up: "How to Organize, Develop and Maintain an Atheist Meet-Up." Apparently, you can bring home the good times of nursing resentments against your churchgoing neighbors.

Atheism, the speakers assure this last audience, is a growth industry. A recent Pew Research Center survey found that 20 percent of 18 to 25 year olds reported no religious affiliation, up from 11 percent just 20 years ago. The continued unpopularity of Bush and the Religious Right expands the potential audience. There is hope, the atheists remind each other. But the enthusiasm seems forced.

It is Sunday, the day atheists stay in bed. They aren't used to being told to spread their message. In the fourth row, a man in a black t-shirt is slumped over, fighting the urge to sleep. ■

**FOR HARRIS, IN A NUCLEAR AGE, THE CREEDS OF FOREIGNERS CONSTITUTE AN ACTIONABLE THREAT. HE KEEPS THE CRUSADES BUT DUMPS ST. AUGUSTINE AND JUST-WAR THEORY IN FAVOR OF THE BUSH DOCTRINE.**

religion too much to plausibly challenge it." CNN reported, "Their tone is overly confrontational rather than gently persuasive."

Harris admits that he advocates a kind of "conversational intolerance" whereby atheists challenge the faithful with pointed questions whenever they bring their unprovable metaphysics into conversation. Go out into the world and make annoyances. I worry what I might say if he sneezes in my presence.

By itself this isn't too troubling. But Harris argues that his brand of intolerance should be taken further. Much further. He writes in *The End of Faith*, "Some propositions are so dangerous that it may even be ethical to kill people for believing them."

"This may seem an extraordinary claim," he continues, "but it merely

monetarist," "a Keynesian," and "a Marxist" in order to demonstrate that classifying children according to religion is some kind of abuse. Reductively, Dawkins believes religion to be a mere set of mental propositions, not a way of life that can begin sacramentally soon after birth. Until Hayekians perform rituals on children, it's safe to call this reasoning tendentious.

He further argues that religion kills curiosity in children. The owl-faced biologist says it takes away questions like why do the feathers of an eagle's wing look spread as they fly? For all his familiarity with the natural world, Dawkins seems to be ignorant of religious people as a species. Can he find a Christian parent who would answer that question by saying, "God did it. Now get ready for the rapture"? Can he not find an atheist



# Looking for Mr. Right

"I was conservative yesterday, I'm a conservative today and I will be a conservative tomorrow," declared Fred Thompson to the Conservative Party of New York,

billing himself as the "consistent conservative" in the GOP race—in contrast to ex-mayor Rudy Giuliani.

In his defense, Rudy cites George Will as calling his eight years in office in the Big Apple the most conservative city government in 50 years.

Truth be told, Thompson was reliably conservative in his Senate years. But so, too, has John McCain been, and Ron Paul, Duncan Hunter, and Tom Tancredo. Hunter, however, splits with Thompson and McCain on trade. Paul disagrees with all six of them on the war. And Tancredo assails McCain for backing Bush's amnesty for 12-20 million illegal aliens.

Will the real conservative please stand up? Or perhaps we should recall John 14:2, "In my father's house there are many mansions."

Sixty years ago, Robert A. Taft was the gold standard. Forty years ago, it was Barry Goldwater who backed Bob Taft against Ike at the 1952 convention. Twenty years ago, it was Ronald Reagan who backed Barry in 1964. Reagan remains the paragon for the consistency of his convictions, the success of his presidency, and the character he exhibited to the end of his life. About Reagan the cliché was true. The greatness of the office found out the greatness in the man.

Reagan defined conservatism for his time. And the issues upon which we agreed were anti-Communism, a national defense second to none, lower tax rates to unleash the engines of economic progress, fiscal responsibility, a strict-constructionist Supreme Court,

law and order, the right to life from conception on, and a resolute defense of family values under assault from the cultural revolution that hit America with hurricane force in the 1960s.

With the collapse of the Soviet Empire and the breakup of the Soviet Union, anti-communism as the defining and unifying issue of the Right was gone. The conservative crack-up commenced.

With George H.W. Bush came the advent of what Fred Barnes, then of *The New Republic*, hailed as Big Government Conservatism. Some thought the phrase oxymoronic. But when Bush stood at the rostrum of the UN General Assembly in October 1991 to declare that America's cause was the creation of a New World Order, the Old Right reached reflexively for their revolvers.

In 1992, with foreign policy off the table, the Bush economic record a perceived failure, and Ross Perot running on protectionism and populism, Bush refused to play his trump card with the Clintons: the social and moral issues he and Lee Atwater had used to beat poor Dukakis senseless in 1988. And so, George H.W. Bush lost the presidency.

Now 15 years later, what does it mean to be a conservative?

There is no Pope who speaks *ex cathedra*. There is no Bible to consult like Goldwater's *Conscience of a Conservative* or Reagan's "no-pale-pastels" platform of 1980. At San Diego in 1996, Bob Dole told his convention he had not bothered to read the platform. Many who heard him did not bother to vote for Bob Dole.

Today, the once great house of con-

servatism is a Tower of Babel. We are Big Government and small government, traditionalist and libertarian, tax-cutter and budget hawk, free trader and economic nationalist. Bush and McCain support amnesty and a "path to citizenship" for illegals. The country wants the laws enforced and a fence on the border.

And Rudy? A McGovernite in 1972, he boasted in the campaign of 1993 that he would "rekindle the Rockefeller, Javits, Lefkowitz tradition" of New York's GOP and "produce the kind of change New York City saw with ... John Lindsay." He ran on the Liberal Party line and supported Mario Cuomo in 1994.

Pro-abortion, anti-gun, again and again he strutted up Fifth Avenue in the June Gay Pride parade and turned the Big Apple into a sanctuary city for illegal aliens. While Ward Connerly goes state to state to end reverse discrimination, Rudy is an affirmative-action man.

Gravitating now to Rudy's camp are those inveterate opportunists, the neo-cons, who see in Giuliani their last hope of redemption for their cakewalk war and their best hope for a renewed struggle against "Islamofascism."

I will, Rudy promises, nominate Scalias. Only one more may be needed to overturn *Roe*. And I will keep Hillary out of the White House.

A Giuliani presidency would represent the return and final triumph of the Republicanism that conservatives went into politics to purge from power. A Giuliani presidency would represent repudiation by the party of the moral, social, and cultural content that, with anti-communism, once separated it from liberal Democrats and defined it as an institution.

Rudy offers the Right the ultimate Faustian bargain: retention of power at the price of one's soul. ■

# The Creativity Conceit

America will always be number one, won't it?

By Eamonn Fingleton

TOKYO—Almost everything the Apple computer company sells these days comes with this memorable statement of origin: “Designed by Apple in California, Assembled in China.” The implication is obvious: a few brilliantly creative, latte-quaffing, hybrid-driving Americans did the real work, while low-skilled Chinese assembly workers, laboring in serf-like conditions and earning a few dollars a day, meekly did the rest.

Certainly that is how it looks to American globalists. Citing Apple's iPod at a Virginia trade conference a few months ago, former U.S. Treasury Secretary John Snow commented, “China gets to do what they do well: low-value manufacturing. America gets to do what we do well: return on intellectual capital. It's good for both of us, but I would rather be on our end of that.” The “Designed in California” message has been presented in similarly triumphalist terms by the Cato Institute's chief trade commentator Daniel Griswold.

Such talk panders to one of the most consequential illusions of contemporary American economic thought: the idea that by dint of its unique creativity alone, the United States can count on remaining the world economy's top dog in perpetuity. Widely shared by intellectuals on both sides of the U.S. political divide, this assumption goes a long way toward explaining the electorate's relative apathy in the face of the collapse of America's erstwhile world-beating manufacturing sector.

Yet the idea that Americans enjoy some sort of special lock on creativity is

obvious nonsense. As the Harvard-educated Japan historian Ivan P. Hall points out, it is just “smug ethnocentric American complacency—little more than whistling in the dark.”

Of course no one disputes the fact that America's past record of inventiveness has been extraordinary. Probably close to one-third of all the major inventions of the last 100 years have been American.

The question is where this enormous burst of creativity came from. Most Americans assume it sprang from a supposedly uniquely creative American culture—a culture that is thus considered an inexhaustible source of economic out-performance going forward.

The truth is more prosaic and—for anyone concerned about the sustainability of American economic leadership—quite chastening. What really made the difference was that, thanks to factors that were to prove all too transitory, 20th-century Americans had greater opportunities for invention. Because they were richer, far more of them studied advanced engineering and science. Moreover, taking the century as a whole, America's huge corporations greatly outspent foreign rivals in research and development.

The problem is that other nations are now not only catching up but in some cases drawing ahead. America's vulnerability has been succinctly summed up in a study by the technology-policy analysts Pat Choate and Edward Miller. In a report to the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission in 2005, they commented, “The United States'

economy is so large and powerful, and its scientific and technological leadership has long been so overwhelming that the nation could ignore potential technology-based flaws, traps, and dangers. But that era is quickly ending.”

Before considering the outlook in detail, let's first dispose of the misconception that America's “culture of freedom” is a crucial advantage in innovation. Clearly culture in the broadest sense has some relevance. Absent a certain basic level of freedom, creativity does not flourish. But the bar is set quite low. While a nation as brutally authoritarian as today's Burma may not excel in innovation, many quite straitjacketed nations down through history have made major scientific and technological breakthroughs.

For a start, none of the most inventive cultures of antiquity—China, Mesopotamia, or Egypt—counted as a civil-liberties Utopia. Nearer our own time, Nazi Germany, fascist-era Japan, and the old Soviet Union all displayed considerable inventiveness. The Japanese, for instance, developed such path-breaking innovations as the Mitsubishi Zero, which proved the most lethal fighter plane in the air in the early days of World War II.

Clearly the lesson of history is that if America's maximalist concept of individual freedom is a factor at all, it is hardly decisive. All the evidence is that something else is much more important: money.

By and large the wealthier a society is, the more inventive it tends to be. Just ask any of the thousands of brilliant Western European scientists and

engineers who—in a phenomenon known as the brain drain—emigrated to the United States in the 1950s and the subsequent decades. They were not seeking freedom—they had that already. Rather, they wanted to work with the most advanced equipment and the largest research budgets.

The logic is surely indisputable: rich nations get to the technological frontier first and have more resources to throw into the fray. Certainly any wider look at world history suggests a remarkable correlation: few societies have shown much inventiveness before they first established the economic wherewithal to equip their thinkers with the most advanced materials, machines, and knowledge.

Where relative economic laggards have sometimes punched above their weight—say, Japan in the 1930s or the Soviet Union in the 1950s—the explanation has been that government leaders have gone out of their way to provide teams of hand-picked scientists and engineers with massive support.

Such exceptions apart, the pattern of national affluence leading to technological leadership has been abundantly apparent throughout history. Thus it was that three centuries before Christ, the Chinese invented the magnetic compass. Contemporary Northern European hunter-gatherers could never have made such a breakthrough. They may have been equally brilliant, and they no doubt enjoyed greater liberty, but they simply lacked the advanced materials and knowledge already available to the much more affluent Chinese.

Similar factors explain the extraordinary inventiveness of the Muslim world during Europe's Dark Ages. The Arabs, after all, were then one of the world's richest peoples, and their craftsmen routinely worked with the rarest and most advanced materials. The Arabs' familiarity with glass-making techniques, for

instance, helps explain why it was the Muslim polymath Abbas Ibn Firnas who in the 9th century invented eyeglasses.

Similarly, when economic leadership passed to Renaissance Europe, so did the baton of inventiveness. Again, ready access to advanced equipment and materials was a key factor. For instance, without plentiful supplies of mercury, the 17th-century Italian physicist Evangelista Torricelli could hardly have invented the barometer.

It is hardly news that the United States has been in relative economic decline since the 1960s. What is less obvious—but seems equally indisputable to anyone who has studied the evidence—is that America has been losing relative position in inventiveness almost as fast. The correlation is not an accident. As other nations have prospered, they have not only spent more on educating scientists and engineers, but have put more of them to work at the technological cutting edge.

For several years, Japan, for instance, has bested the United States in the proportion both of its workforce and its gross domestic product that it devotes to research and development. Japan, moreover, excels in the quality of its R & D. Whereas much of what for statistical purposes counts as R & D in the United States lately consists merely of such lightweight activities as website building and software customization, the Japanese focus their technological efforts much more tightly on building solid competitive advantage in export industries.

Meanwhile, the Europeans have been leaping ahead in Big Science. The trend is expected to be highlighted next year with the opening of Europe's \$5-billion Large Hadron Collider. Located on the Swiss-French border, it will be by far the world's largest energy particle accelerator. A proposed American response, the International Linear Collider, will be

heavily funded by Japan—so heavily indeed that it may well be located on Japanese soil.

In retrospect, we can see that America's era of greatest relative inventiveness was in the 1930s through the 1960s. In the 1930s alone, American inventions included nylon, the helicopter, the electron microscope, the automated teller machine, and the plain paper copier. Then in the 1940s came the bazooka, the atomic bomb, the microwave oven, and the transistor. The 1950s brought the nuclear reactor, industrial diamonds, the computer hard drive, the integrated circuit, the video cassette recorder, and the communications satellite, followed in the 1960s by the laser, the computer mouse, and light-emitting diodes.

Of course, the flow of significant American breakthroughs hardly stopped in 1970. But American leadership has become increasingly attenuated. Although Americans played a key role in developing both personal computers and cell phones, for instance, these innovations were rather predictable refinements of earlier devices. For the most part, the main technical task was miniaturization—a task that was from the start shared with other nations, most notably the Japanese. In the case of cell phones, the Japanese contribution—unbeknownst to the American press—has been particularly impressive. According to research by Deutsche Bank, as of 2000, of the 36 suppliers worldwide who then made one or more of the key components in cell phones, 29 were Japanese. Only one was American.

The story has been similar in liquid crystal displays. Scientists from the United States, but also from Japan, Britain, and Switzerland, have all made significant contributions. Meanwhile, commercialization has been led by the Japanese. In a related development, the Japanese claim most of the credit for creating high-definition television,

despite a much publicized if sadly unsustainable intervention by Zenith and General Instrument in the early 1990s.

In terms of its influence on people's lives, the biggest American invention of recent decades has undoubtedly been the Internet. Yet here again, on close examination, the news for American technological optimists is less than reassuring. Yes, the Internet traces its origins to the U.S. Defense Department's ARPANET. But this dates back to the 1960s, a time when the U.S. government spent far more, in real terms, on stimulating pioneering scientific work than it can afford these days.

As for the practical application of the technologies underlying the ARPANET, it was left to a Briton working in a Swiss laboratory, Tim Berners-Lee, to come up with the World Wide Web. America's claim to have led the conquest of cyberspace has been further diluted by the crucial role played by other nations in developing fiber optics (without which the Internet would not only be extremely slow but extremely expensive in communications costs). One of the most important early breakthroughs was made by the British-based Shanghai-born physicist Charles Kuen Kao. The Japanese, moreover, claim much of the credit for mastering the manufacturing processes to mass produce not only optical fibers but the laser diodes that transmit the necessary optical signals.

If America's declining technological prowess has been little publicized in the United States, the facts have long been obvious in international trade figures. In their 2005 report, Choate and Miller summed up the point in their definition of a China Sphere, a region encompassing not only mainland China but the wider Confucian world from Vietnam to Japan. As of 2004, the China Sphere already enjoyed a surplus in technological trade with the United States of \$60 billion—a surplus that grows with each passing year.

Of course, the United States continues to enjoy a surplus in patent royalties and other intellectual property payments. But the flow is far thinner than Americans realize. As of 2004, America's intellectual property surplus with the rest of the world came to a mere \$29 billion—a drop in the bucket compared to a current account deficit of \$668 billion. As Choate points out, the United States could greatly increase the flow were it to make judicious improvements to its badly outdated patent system but even then the flow would go nowhere near eliminating America's now disastrously high trade deficits.

Meanwhile, the world's technological center of gravity inexorably shifts toward East Asia. Yet the East Asian technological challenge has yet to be taken seriously in the West. As Brian McVeigh, the author of an important book on Japanese higher education, points out, Western condescension is misplaced. Although East Asians were slow to enter the technology race, this reflected merely a legacy of isolationism that until relatively recent times had cut the region off from outside intellectual influences. The policy originated as a response to rising Western colonialism in the 17th century. Then, when the region began opening up, government leaders insisted that the first duty of leading scientists was not to win Nobel prizes but rather to build national economic muscle—and to do so mainly by overtaking the West in advanced manufacturing. Throughout the region, career incentives have been structured to ensure that the most brilliant scientists go into industry rather than universities or public research institutes. Those who follow this path rarely make headlines, let alone win Nobel prizes, but the policy has paid off in ever strengthening trade balances.

Again, Japan provides the most telling example. Japan's current account surplus in 2006—at \$174 billion, up from a mere \$56 billion in 1989—represented

\$1,368 per Japanese citizen. That was probably a record for any major nation and more than ten times China's per-capita performance of \$135.

This brings us back to the untold story behind Apple's statement of origin. As is often the case in international economics these days, the real story is in what is *not* said. Although Apple is correct in stating that its products are assembled in China, this sidesteps the real question: where are the components made? Whereas the assembly of the final product is not much of a technical test, the manufacture of the key components is something else—a challenge that only the most advanced nations using the most highly trained workers working in the most expensively equipped factories can address.

In the iPod's case, one key component is crucial: a miniaturized hard drive that requires some of the world's most advanced precision machining. It is made by Toshiba of Tokyo, and it constitutes a disproportionately large share of the entire manufacturing cost. In terms of the iPod's employment implications, the real winner has not, of course, been California, where Apple's design department has created negligible employment opportunities. Nor has it been China, where assembly workers are paid a pittance. Rather, it has been in the highly capital-intensive manufacturing facilities of Japan, where factory workers enjoy some of the world's highest wages in world manufacturing. Even if the Japanese contribution is taken for granted by a handful of product designers in California, you can say this for it: it pays the bills. Just look at Japan's trade surpluses. ■

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# Only So Much Moral Clarity

ON OCT. 10, the House Foreign Affairs Committee voted 27-21 in favor of a resolution recognizing the organized deportations and mass killings of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire during WWI as genocide, prompting Turkey to recall its ambassador from Washington. Commemorated by Armenians on April 24—the date of the 1915 arrest of prominent politicians, journalists, academics, and clerics—the subsequent genocide of 1.5 million was a state-sponsored effort crafted by the ruling Committee of Union and Progress to eliminate the Armenian population of the eastern Anatolian provinces. CUP agents, Kurdish irregulars, and members of the Ottoman military carried out a series of massacres and forced marches into the Syrian desert clearly intended for the purpose of extermination.

Though it is recognized by dozens of governments as such, the Armenian genocide remains bitterly contested by the Turkish government, which criminalizes speech that refers to the genocide under an article that penalizes “insulting Turkishness.” As related in *The Burning Tigris* and *A Shameful Act* by Peter Balakian and Taner Akcam, there really is no question about state planning and execution of a deliberate genocide. One U.S. consul stationed in the empire at the time cabled home that the authorities made no “secret of the fact that their main object is the extermination of the whole Armenian race.”

In the same week that former Bush speechwriter Michael Gerson lectured conservatives on the importance of “moral ideals in politics and foreign policy,” the White House, under intense pressure from the Turkish government, again endorsed Ankara’s policy of denying the Armenian genocide: “the determination of whether or not the events con-

stitute a genocide should be a matter for historical inquiry, not legislation.”

This high-minded concern for the integrity of historical research and wariness about using the word “genocide” are remarkable changes for this administration. President Bush has pronounced the conflict in Darfur genocide, he and his supporters have demagogued fears of genocide in post-withdrawal Iraq, and he has invoked revisionist theories of the causes of the Cambodian genocide to bash opponents of the Iraq War. But when confronted with the acknowledgment of the first genocide of the 20th century, the administration becomes mute. Rarely has its lack of “moral clarity” been so clear.

Despite the White House’s accommodation, Turkey has begun preparing for an invasion of northern Iraq in response to attacks attributed to the Kurdish Workers’ Party. Its timing is meant to send a signal: Ankara will make the situation for our soldiers in Iraq much more difficult if the resolution advances, and there have been hints that Turkey might even cease military co-operation with the U.S., as it has already done with France over a similar dispute. According to Turkish MP Egemen Bagis, passage of the resolution “would mean losing Turkey’s support in the region.” It is this willingness to sacrifice its American alliance over the Armenian resolution that makes Turkey’s genocide denial—which might otherwise arguably belong to its internal affairs—a legitimate concern for Congress.

Armenian genocide denial on the Right is not limited to the debate over the House resolution. Responding to the ADLs grudging acknowledgment of the genocide, *National Review* contributor Michael Rubin wrote, “But, on the issue of whether genocide—a deliberate plan to

eradicate a people—occurred or not, there is a big gap between the narrative of Diaspora communities and that of prominent historians. The historical debate is more complex.” Granted, the debate is complex, but certain basic realities are no longer in question.

Akcam’s work in particular puts the lie to Rubin’s claim about the differences between the Armenian Diaspora and “prominent historians,” since he was born in Turkey and is a scholar of history and genocide studies. As for “prominent historians,” Bernard Lewis stands out as an Ottoman historian who once described the genocide of 1915 as a “holocaust” and has since conveniently adopted the denialist line. As published evidence of the genocide has become more widely available, Lewis has become more intransigently hostile to the idea, using his reputation to make denying the Armenian genocide seem respectable. Were it any other genocide, denialism would rightly make Lewis politically radioactive, but supporters of the Iraq War embrace him and take him as their authority on the region.

This raises a number of questions. What sort of ally would weaken an alliance or endanger Americans over a symbolic measure? What sort of ally would make such threats for the sake of perpetuating a policy that criminalizes free speech and suppresses historical inquiry? Not the sort of ally that Washington should wish to appease. And what sort of administration would yield to blackmail and endorse the denial of a documented state-run genocide? Apparently it is President Bush’s sort of administration, whose members are very free with the “lessons of history” as long as they can re-imagine the past to suit some bellicose design. ■

# Obama's Odds

The politics of hope might catch on—if the purveyor's name didn't rhyme with Osama.

By W. James Antle III

THE TITLE OF HIS 2006 bestseller notwithstanding, Barack Obama's presidential campaign has been anything but audacious—and many supporters are starting to lose hope. Among Washington political observers, there is a growing sense that the freshman Illinois senator and star of the last Democratic National Convention has let his moment of opportunity pass.

At one “insidious Washington-insider cocktail party,” *New Republic* senior editor Michael Crowley reported that the conventional wisdom was that “Obama blew a vital opening earlier this year to become the Democratic primary frontrunner, and that his campaign may well have peaked already.” Some outside-the-Beltway confirmation could be found in *New York* magazine, where John Heilemann wrote, “The season now ending may not have been the summer of Barack Obama's discontent, but no one—least of all the candidate himself—is likely to remember it as his summer of love, either.”

Nor has the autumn been much better. According to the RealClearPolitics website, Hillary Clinton is crushing Obama by an average of 25.6 points in national polls. In an October FoxNews survey, Obama slipped below 20 percent. Hillary has finally opened up a lead in Iowa, dominates in New Hampshire and South Carolina, and even topped Obama in third-quarter fundraising. Earlier this year, Obama was tied for the lead in Iowa, just eight points behind nationally, and outraising Clinton.

This reversal of fortunes is particularly remarkable given that Obama might actually be a stronger general-election candidate than Clinton. He remains a fresh face with no baggage from the Clinton years. Unlike Hillary, he can claim to have opposed the Iraq War from the beginning. His negatives are far lower, he appeals to independents, and he doesn't yet inspire the same degree of vitriol among conservatives that she does. At a gathering of right-leaning journalists earlier this year, a red-state Republican senator remarked, “Barack's a liberal, but he's a good man.”

Most national poll numbers show Obama edging out both Rudy Giuliani and John McCain in head-to-head match-ups. He fares even better against Fred Thompson and trounces Mitt Romney. So far, Hillary Clinton achieves similar results—in some cases, she even outperforms Obama—but she has less growth potential because voter attitudes toward her are more fully defined. This will be important, as the Democrats still generally poll less than 50 percent.

There are concerns that Obama may be too inexperienced to serve as a wartime commander in chief. His judgment was widely questioned when he answered a YouTube debate participant by pledging to hold summits with Iran, Syria, Cuba, North Korea, and Venezuela during his first year in office. It was questioned again when he seemed to propose military incursions into Pakistan to kill or capture al-Qaeda terrorists, an idea that had even some neoconservatives

uncharacteristically concerned about political stability in the Muslim world.

Against someone like Joe Biden, perhaps these concerns would have more legitimacy. It is not clear, however, that they represent decisive arguments in favor of Clinton. Aside from Hillary's 2006 re-election to the Senate, her public record independent of her husband is hardly more accomplished than Obama's. While she has successfully triangulated on Iraq, her vote on the Lieberman-Kyl amendment suggests that she has learned little from the present war that would prevent her from making similar mistakes with regard to Iran.

Obama would offer liberals a far more decisive break from the Bush administration's foreign policy. He has attempted to use the Democratic establishment's acquiescence as an argument in his favor, contending that what he lacks in experience he makes up for in sound judgment. Where Ross Perot quipped, “Well, they've got a point, I don't have any experience running up a \$4 trillion debt,” Obama points out he has never voted the country into a disastrous war.

Although Clinton's lead is now so formidable that Democratic interest groups are increasingly afraid to cross her by endorsing her rivals, it would be premature to count Obama out. He still draws the biggest crowds. His supporters are enthusiastic, engaged, and Internet-savvy. After political analyst Tom Bevan asked readers if Obama had peaked, he reported that “the mere posing of the

question seemed to ignite a passion among Obama supporters that gave me flashbacks to the last time I wrote something derogatory about Ron Paul.”

The intense political polarization of the Clinton and Bush years has left many swing voters in the vast neglected center. Obama, though unquestionably a man of the Left, has been able to speak to Americans tired of seeing their country carved up and shoehorned into little red and blue boxes. Obama substantively drains liberal positions of their leftist character, achieving centrism through soaring rhetoric rather than Democratic Leadership Council-style policy proposals. His detractors find him platitudinous, his supporters inspiring—but Obama understands how a similar generosity of spirit kept the ideological extremist label from ever sticking to Ronald Reagan.

This has been Obama’s approach since he burst onto the national scene with his 2004 Democratic Convention speech. He rejected both racial and ideological division. He ridiculed the predictive power of *USA Today*’s color-coded electoral map by saying, “We worship an awesome God in the blue states, and we don’t like federal agents poking around in our libraries in the red states.” And he was antiwar without sounding like a McGovernite caricature: “There are patriots who opposed the war in Iraq and there are patriots who supported the war in Iraq.”

In Obama’s America, there are two major problems: the Bush administration and cynicism. According to a 2004 *New Yorker* profile, it was the latter that brought him into politics. “People are always asking me, ‘Why, with these fancy degrees and a professorship, would you want to go into something dirty and nasty like politics?’” Obama says in his stump speech. “And my answer is, ‘We’ve got too much cynicism in this country, and we’re all in this

together, and government expresses that.’”

A Democrat who is comfortable with religion, reluctant to offend conservative cultural sensibilities, and able to make some of his most divisive opinions sound like uncontroversial goals shared by everyone might do more than roil the 2008 electoral map. Obama could popularize liberalism in a way that no one has since the 1970s (something that ought to give his conservative fans pause).

None of this is to say that if Obama won the Democratic nomination, he wouldn’t face obstacles in the general election. He would be the first black presidential nominee of a major party. His middle name is “Hussein,” and my spell check prompts me to change his surname to “Osama.” And Obama is campaigning to lead an American war against Islamic terrorism, a tall order when a significant percentage of the country is disposed to believe claims like *Insight* magazine’s (discredited) report that Obama was educated in a *madrasa*.

Yet it is by no means obvious that America is not “ready” for a black president, as many African-Americans fear. Colin Powell led incumbent Bill Clinton in national presidential polls back in 1995, and as a Republican, he received less black support than Obama can count on. The number of white voters who would oppose Obama on racial grounds yet cast ballots for the other leading Democratic candidates—Hillary Clinton, Bill Richardson, and even \$400-haircut John Edwards—is vanishingly small. Many whites across the political spectrum would like to see an African-American in the White House as proof the country has transcended racism.

The Bradley effect may be as dead as Tom Bradley, the black Los Angeles mayor who lost the 1982 California gubernatorial election even though polls consistently showed him in the lead. In 2006,

five black candidates ran for governor or U.S. senator. The only discrepancy between the final polling and the actual election results was in the Maryland Senate race between Democrat Ben Cardin and black Republican Michael Steele. Even in that case, the polls accurately reflected Steele’s support and merely understated Cardin’s. The last undisputed major examples of the Bradley effect took place in the late 1980s.

Just last year, an African-American Democrat was elected governor of Massachusetts, a state with a black population of less than 5 percent. A black Republican defeated by 12 points a white statewide-elected official in the Ohio gubernatorial primary, another electorate that was more than 90 percent white. There is ample evidence that whites will support black candidates who try to broaden their appeal beyond their own demographic base.

Obama’s biggest problem is not race. It is that his general-election strengths are holding him back in the primaries. Obama’s generosity toward ideological foes is at odds with the Democratic base’s anger. His reluctance to hit Hillary on Iraq and Iran complicates his bid to be the authentically antiwar candidate. He is too cautious, and too averse to confrontation, to beat the Clinton machine—think Paul Tsongas or Bill Bradley. As the recent flag-pin flap showed, it won’t be easy for Obama to retain his advantages while adapting to indignant liberalism.

The Barack brigades would surely argue they don’t want to peak too soon and plummet like Bradley and Howard Dean before them. Except time is running out. If nominated, Obama becomes the frontrunner. But a frontrunner’s strategy won’t propel him to first place in the Democratic contest. ■

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# There's Something About Barry

Goldwater has many claimants to his legacy, but most lack his rebellious spirit.

By Daniel McCarthy

IN THE YEARS LEADING up to Barry Goldwater's death, conservatives wondered what had happened to their hero. They had wondered for some time, actually—since at least 1976, when Goldwater endorsed moderate incumbent Gerald Ford over insurgent conservative Ronald Reagan for the Republican presidential nomination. Back then, conservative activist John Lofton suggested Goldwater must not be in his right mind, “still in an ether fog” from recent hip replacement surgery: “Possessed of all his faculties, he would never say the things he has been saying about Reagan.”

But by the early '90s, there could be no doubt: Goldwater damned the Religious Right at every opportunity, spoke out for abortion rights, and not only supported letting gays serve openly in the military, but even lent his name to an effort to pass federal antidiscrimination laws for homosexuals—quite a turn-about for a man who as a senator had once stood on federalist grounds against the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Goldwater's death in May 1998 rendered all of that moot. Whatever his heterodoxies, his place in conservative history, and conservatives' hearts, was settled. He was still, as Pat Buchanan wrote at the time, “the father of us all.”

Yet now, less than a decade on, Goldwater is at the center of a philosophical paternity suit. Every part of the political spectrum wants to claim him. Libertarian Nick Gillespie, editor of *Reason*, recently called down the ghost of Goldwater to testify that government does

not belong in the bedroom, the boardroom, “or, as [Sen. Larry] Craig might add, in your bathroom.” *National Review*'s John J. Miller and the Claremont-McKenna Colleges' Andrew Busch have contested such uses of Goldwater, with Busch claiming in the *Claremont Review of Books* early last year that in his heyday, the Arizonan had been more a social conservative than a libertarian. Even liberals have joined the fray, with Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Watergate informer John W. Dean holding up Goldwater as a contrast to—in the title of Dean's recent book—*Conservatives Without Conscience*, such as George W. Bush, Tom DeLay, and the leaders of the Religious Right.

With all this goodwill toward the late senator, opportunistic though it may be, it's easy to forget just how polarizing a figure Goldwater was in the 1960s and how reviled by the Left. To the conservative cheer “in your heart, you know he's right,” liberals taunted, “in your guts, you know he's nuts.” Radical libertarians like Murray Rothbard didn't think much of Goldwater either—he was not actually for abolishing the Tennessee Valley Authority or Social Security, after all, and he had mused aloud about using tactical nuclear weapons in Vietnam. “We don't want to occupy any part of Southeast Asia,” Goldwater said. “All we want to do is get this little war over with. There've been several suggestions made, I don't think we would use any of them. But defoliation of the forest by low-yield atomic weapons could be well done.”

To his critics and much of the public, Goldwater was a warmonger. Bill Moyers, then an aide to President Johnson, dramatized that impression with one of the sleaziest attack ads of all time, “Daisy,” which juxtaposed images of a little girl in a field pulling petals off a flower with a mushroom cloud that obliterated the screen as President Johnson intoned, “These are the stakes! To make a world in which all of God's children can live, or to go into the dark. We must either love each other, or we must die.” The ad aired only once, and that was enough.

Just how far Goldwater's reputation has come since then can be seen in “Mr. Conservative: Goldwater on Goldwater,” a 2006 documentary, now on DVD, co-produced and narrated by the senator's granddaughter, C.C. Goldwater. It's the anti-“Daisy.” The 90-minute program features glowing tributes from old-guard conservatives and newly appreciative liberals alike: Republican stalwart Morton Blackwell Jr. and New Right funding father Richard Viguerie alongside James Carville, Al Franken, and, yes, former Goldwater girl Hillary Clinton. The film is not all rose-tinted: its most affecting moment comes as Barry Jr. and his sister Joanne, interviewed separately, struggle to say how much they wanted their father to be proud of them, something Barry Sr. was too stoic to express—“We knew he loved us,” says the younger Barry, “but he had a hard time showing it, and that probably hurt.” Other segments attest to the strain politics put on the family. But all that



serves to humanize the icon. What criticisms the film makes of Goldwater's politics, mostly concerning his record on civil rights, are glancing blows at worst.

A further sign of the strange new respect accorded Barry Goldwater is the appearance of a fresh edition of his 1960 philosophical manifesto, *The Conscience of a Conservative*—originally published independently in Shepherdsville, Kentucky by Goldwater supporter Clarence Manion—from Princeton University Press, as part of the James Madison Library in American Politics assembled by Princeton Professor Sean Wilentz. Last time *Conscience* was in print, Regnery brought it out, and the book was aimed squarely at conservative readers, with an introduction by Pat Buchanan. Princeton's edition, by contrast, seems almost designed to prick conservatives' sensibilities, with an afterword by Robert F. Kennedy Jr. that spends more words attacking Christian conservatives and the New Right than it does celebrating Goldwater. A new foreword by George Will is, in its own way, as critical of conservatism's recent direction as RFK's contribution is, but with the added sting of greater truth.

There are still Goldwater books by and for conservatives: William F. Buckley Jr. is working on one now, and *A Glorious Disaster*, by Goldwater '64 campaign treasurer William J. Middendorf II, came out last year. But the fashion in much of the recent literature is to emphasize the differences—real, if often exaggerated—between the senator and the movement he fathered. The new *Conscience of a Conservative* takes what might be called the “anti-fusionist” side in the Goldwater wars, with Will distilling the case for Goldwater as a pure libertarian.

It's a much stronger case than the one made by people like Andrew Busch who claim that Goldwater was an early culture warrior because he sometimes

exploited what at the time was called the “social issue,” a backlash against rising crime, racial unrest, and the sexual revolution. In 1964, he wrote a note to campaign adviser F. Clifton White saying, “Agree completely with you on morality issue. Believe it is the most effective we have come up with. Also agree with your program. Please get it launched immediately.” That program was a 27-minute documentary, “Choice,” designed, in the words of its producers, “to portray and remind the people of something they already know exists, and that is the moral crisis in America, the rising crime rate, rising juvenile delinquency, narcotics, pornography, filthy magazines.” It included shots of topless women and rioting blacks.

But it never aired. Goldwater himself pulled the plug, calling it “nothing but a racist film.” Whatever advantage Goldwater saw in playing to the “social issue,” there was a limit to how far he would go. That was shown as well in his handling of the discovery that LBJ's personal assistant, Walter Jenkins, had been arrested in the men's room of a D.C.-area YMCA. Goldwater refused to capitalize on the scandal—“Hands off,” he told his campaign staff, as William Middendorf recalls. “Walter Jenkins had been a member of his Air Force Reserve unit, and Barry would do nothing to add to the pain of his wife and six children.”

Yes, he had a libertarian streak, and in his foreword to *Conscience*, Will paints a vivid picture of Goldwater as a rugged Western individualist. “You must remember this,” he writes, “Goldwater was a conservative from, and formed by, a place with precious little past to conserve. Westerners have no inclination to go through life with cricks in their necks from looking backward.” To Will, this set Goldwater apart not only from the later Religious Right—“who argue that government can, and urgently must, have an active agenda to defend morals and pro-

mote virtue”—but even from the traditionalists of his own time. “The growing conservative intelligentsia would savor many flavors of conservatism,” writes Will, “from Edmund Burke's to T.S. Eliot's, conservatisms grounded on religious reverence, nostalgia, and resistance to the permanent revolutions of capitalist, market society. Such conservatisms would have been unintelligible, even repellent, to Goldwater, if he had taken the time to notice them.”

Unfortunately for George Will, *The Conscience of a Conservative* was written—ghost-written—by a man who subscribed to the very Burke- and Eliot-derived conservatisms that Will thinks Goldwater would have found repellent. Will acknowledges the “assistance” of L. Brent Bozell, William F. Buckley's brother-in-law, in compiling Goldwater's book. But “assistance” is an understatement: Bozell wrote it, in six weeks during 1959, under commission from Goldwater organizer Clarence Manion, lately the dean of Notre Dame's law school. And Will doesn't mention that Bozell, even then, was a traditionalist Catholic who took care to distance *Conscience* from pure *laissez faire*: by page 2 of Goldwater's manifesto, we get the characteristically Bozellian statement, “Conservatism is not an economic theory” that “puts material things in their proper place ... economics plays only a subsidiary role.” Bozell would later be famous for championing a strongly Catholic traditionalism against Frank Meyer's libertarian-inflected fusionism in the pages of *National Review*—and later still, Bozell would become a radical traditionalist with his own magazine, *Triumph*.

Will is not wrong to highlight the loosely libertarian, Western soul of Barry Goldwater. His geographic origins shaped his character, as did the mores of a his social class. Michael Lind was on to something in 1995 when he wrote in the

*New York Review of Books* that Goldwater's "socially tolerant views" were of a piece with "his class and particularly the well-to-do circles he frequents in Arizona," where support for abortion rights, for example, had long been unexceptional. (Goldwater's first wife, Peggy, co-founded Planned Parenthood of Arizona in 1937; his daughter Joanne had an illegal abortion, with the senator's support, in 1955.) There may have also been a biographical element in Goldwater's distaste for the likes of Jerry Falwell—about whom Goldwater once said "every good Christian should kick him in the ass." Goldwater was a non-churchgoing Episcopalian, grandson of a Jew, and a direct descendant on his mother's side of Rhode Island founder Roger Williams, a paragon of religious liberty. Little wonder that Falwell's brand of political Christianity was anathema to him.

More than he was ever a philosophical libertarian, Goldwater had an ingrained character formed by the individualism of his region. Yet that did not stop him from attracting the support of traditionalist Catholics like Manion and Bozell—far from it, for they agreed with his anti-statism and, especially in Bozell's case, with his militant anti-Communism. Once a defining quality, more than 15 years after the end of the Cold War that anti-Communism is now all too easily overlooked. Yet as Sam Tanenhaus, editor of the *New York Times Book Review* and a perceptive scholar of conservative history, has pointed out, Goldwater's hawkish anti-Communism is the key common denominator between the senator and much of today's Right—including the neoconservatives.

Tanenhaus was visibly frustrated at the revisionist liberal interpretations of Goldwater emanating from his fellow panelists John Patrick Diggins and Robert Kennedy Jr. at a May 1 New York Public Library forum on *The Conscience*

*of a Conservative* and the other inaugural title in Princeton's James Madison Library, John Kenneth Galbraith's *The New Industrial State*. "There's a kind of fantasy created that Goldwater was a singular, heroic conservative unattached to the movement that followed," said Tanenhaus. "We should be a little careful about drawing distinctions between what we imagine was a kind of utopian Goldwaterism and the Republicanism we have now."

To illustrate the link between Goldwater and latter-day conservatism, Tanenhaus read from the concluding chapter of *Conscience of a Conservative*, "The Soviet Menace": "In addition to [parrying the enemy's] blows, we must strike our own. In addition to guarding our frontiers, we must try to puncture his. In addition to keeping the free world free, we must try to make the Communist world free. To these ends, we must always try to engage the enemy at times and places, and with weapons, of our own choosing." "This," offered Tanenhaus, "is the approach to the enemy that we now see pursued by the Bush administration." Bozell had penned the words, but Goldwater stood behind them, and the Goldwater movement, like conservatives today, wanted "victory" not "containment" or "deterrence."

Sure enough, less than a month after Tanenhaus made that argument, Roger Kimball of the *New Criterion* published a column trumpeting a 1961 Goldwater essay from *National Review*, "A Foreign Policy for America," as being neatly in tune with the Bush administration's foreign policy. "Substitute the phrase 'radical Islam' for 'Communist,'" wrote Kimball, "make allowances for a few other anachronisms, and 'A Foreign Policy for America' could as well have been written today as in 1961." Neoconservatives, no less than libertarians and traditionalists, make their own claims to the Goldwater patrimony.

That should not be too much of a surprise. For the Right, Goldwater really is "the father of us all," and each branch of the conservative movement can plausibly trace itself back to some tendency, however great or slight, in the Goldwater effort. But that's not to say all claims on the family estate are equally valid. Nor is it the case that conservatives who blend the Goldwater movement's tendencies toward economic libertarianism, values rhetoric, and militarism are necessarily the most truly "Goldwaterite" of all. If that were the case, even Rudy Giuliani would be a Goldwaterite: after all, the former New York mayor is socially liberal but promises religious conservatives strict judges, he's putatively economically conservative, and he's very hawkish. Yet few old-guard Goldwaterites take Giuliani's bona fides seriously. Even the genteel William Middendorf, who praised Mitt Romney and John McCain in a C-SPAN interview with David Frum, expressed doubts about Giuliani. Almost as few old Goldwaterites credit George W. Bush's pretence to the mantle of Mr. Conservative. But if the Republican Party is full of pretenders, where does one look for Goldwater's true heirs?

To answer that question, one has to look to the sharpest division that split the Goldwater movement of the '60s. It wasn't the division between libertarians and traditionalists, it was the division that separated idealistic libertarians and traditionalists alike, the campaign amateurs, from the campaign professionals. The conservative movement still pays lip service to economic liberty, social order, and military strength—but on all three points, Republicans have become hollow men who have preserved the rites of Goldwaterism but who long ago lost its spirit. That was an amateur spirit—in both the best and worst senses of the word—and it drew together in common cause traditional-

ists and libertarians as different as Brent Bozell and Goldwater speechwriter Karl Hess.

Conventional wisdom among conservatives has it that Goldwater and his followers just weren't savvy politicians and media manipulators. Perhaps nobody could have beaten Lyndon Johnson in 1964: as George Will argues, America wasn't ready to have three presidents in the space of two years. But, the story goes, Goldwater would have done much better if he had run a more professional campaign. Lines like "extremism in defense of liberty is no vice ... moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue," which Hess included in Goldwater's convention acceptance speech, might be stirring stuff, but they terrified the

The idealism and amateurism of the Goldwater people inspired a movement in a way that political professionals never could: indeed, the cynical professionalism and win-at-all-costs mentality of today's conservatives, best represented by Karl Rove, has had the opposite effect. Goldwater galvanized America's youth—Young Americans for Freedom grew directly out of Youth for Goldwater. Under the professional Republicans of the past decade, on the other hand, conservatives have lost whatever momentum they had with the next generation.

Amateurism and idealism united the libertarian and traditionalist components of the Goldwater movement and kept them at least minimally honest:

run-ins with the law for having sleazy relationships with lobbyists or soliciting sex in the men's room.

No putatively conservative politician today—with the exception of Ron Paul—has the idealism of a Goldwater or brings together idealists like Bozell and Hess. Even the one area where latter-day professional conservatives seem most idealistic, in their support for grandiose schemes of democratization and empire-building abroad, there is a startling contrast. Bozell and Hess, each driven by a vision of a more just America—the one vision radically Catholic, the other radically libertarian—came to oppose the Vietnam War. Late in life, Goldwater described that intervention as "a useless war," and Tanenhaus speculates that Goldwater, like his friend Bill Buckley, would sooner or later have opposed Bush's war in Iraq: "Presumably Goldwater would have seen this, but you never know." The idealism of the Goldwater movement did infect its foreign policy—a look at *Conscience of a Conservative* will confirm that. But ultimately, the ideals that Goldwater stood for were not nation-building and empire.

Today, nation-building and empire, together with K-Street politics, is about all that animates the Republicans who claim to be following in Goldwater's footsteps. They've lost what the 1960 and 1964 Goldwater movements were really all about, and they won't rediscover what they've lost by furrowing their brows wondering if Goldwaterism was really purely libertarian or fusionist. Goldwater himself was a man of the American West, and his legacy can be claimed by either libertarians or traditionalists—if they can put the principled spirit of the old movement before the emoluments of politics. ■

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## THE IDEALISM AND AMATEURISM OF THE GOLDWATER PEOPLE INSPIRED A MOVEMENT IN A WAY THAT POLITICAL PROFESSIONALS NEVER COULD.

public. And the "Arizona mafia" that kept tight reins of the '64 campaign, men like Stephen Shadegg and Richard Kleindienst, might be Goldwater's friends, but they didn't know how to run a national campaign. All these men disliked East Coast political pros like Clif White, and the feeling was reciprocal. As one pro, Charlie Barr, once yelled at Hess, "You g--damn Boy Scouts are going to ruin everything!" But those Boy Scouts did what the pros couldn't, even if they lost the election.

The conventional wisdom overvalues politics and undervalues the philosophy of the movement: it overlooks the ways in which Goldwater succeeded far beyond the electoral success of a Johnson or a Nixon—or a Bush. *The Conscience of a Conservative* continues to be read today because it isn't a political tract, a soulless campaign book of the sort generated by every other modern presidential effort.

winning the election—the nomination in 1960, the presidency in 1964—was not everything to them, and the idealists who rallied to Goldwater were willing to follow their beliefs even into the wilderness. In Karl Hess's case, that took him into radical libertarianism and an alliance with the New Left and, ultimately, led him to stop paying income taxes to a government he opposed, an act of rebellion for which the IRS nearly ruined him. In Bozell's case, the fires of idealism lit a conflagration of Catholic reaction: he came to believe that "a state of war exists" between the Church and a United States that had legalized abortion, and Bozell spent time in jail for his disruptive but nonviolent protests against abortion clinics. As troubling as the extremes to which Hess and Bozell went might seem, at least they ran afoul of the law for the sake of their principles. Compare their example with those of recent Republicans who have had

# We Have Ways...

The Bush administration continues to disavow torture—and to officialize its practice.

By James Bovard

ON OCT. 4, the *New York Times* blew another ten-foot hole in the Bush administration's torture cover-up. The *Times* revealed that the Justice Department produced a secret legal opinion in early 2005 permitting CIA interrogators to use "combined effects" on detainees, including head slapping, waterboarding, frigid temperatures, manacled for many hours in stress positions, and blasting with loud music to assure sleep deprivation. The *Times* labeled the memo as an "expansive endorsement of the harshest interrogation techniques ever used by the Central Intelligence Agency."

Within hours of the paper hitting the streets, President Bush issued the same moth-eaten denial he has used many times since Abu Ghraib: "This government does not torture people. You know, we stick to U.S. law and our international obligations." But it is the "law" as contorted by administration lawyers who rubberstamp whatever methods Bush or Cheney demand. The same lawyers who tell Bush he has "inherent authority" to wiretap Americans' phone calls also tell him he has authority to redefine torture, regardless of the English-language precedents dating back to Chaucer.

The *Times* detailed how, after 9/11, the CIA constructed an interrogation program by "consulting Egyptian and Saudi intelligence officials and copying Soviet interrogation methods long used in training American servicemen to withstand capture." For decades, the United States government condemned Soviet, Egyptian, and Saudi torture. But interrogation systems designed to compel victims to sign false confessions

now provide the model for protecting America in the new millennium.

In late 2005, Congress passed the McCain Detainee Treatment Act, which prohibited the U.S. government from using "cruel, inhumane, or degrading" interrogation methods. The *Times* revealed that the Justice Department responded to the new law with another secret memo declaring that all the techniques listed above were not "cruel, inhumane or degrading." The secret torture memos, written by Steven Bradbury, the head of the Justice Department Office of Legal Counsel, relied on "a Supreme Court finding that only conduct that 'shocks the conscience'" would go too far.

While Bush may believe he has sole discretion to define torture, CIA interrogators increasingly fear facing grand juries. The *Times* noted, "From the secret sites in Afghanistan, Thailand and Eastern Europe where C.I.A. teams held al-Qaeda terrorists, questions for the lawyers at C.I.A. headquarters arrived daily. Nervous interrogators wanted to know: Are we breaking the laws against torture?"

According to Joanne Mariner, a lawyer with Human Rights Watch, the purpose of the secret Justice Department memos was to "to immunize US officials from prosecution for abusive conduct. They were meant to facilitate abuses, not to prevent them." The fact that the Justice Department officially blessed torturous methods makes it far more difficult to prosecute CIA and other interrogators for breaking the law.

As usual, the administration claimed it was doing Americans a favor by keeping them in the dark. White House Press Sec-

retary Dana Perino declared, "It's appropriate that applications of the laws and techniques are kept secret. And I don't think that providing those to the American public would serve them well." Yale law Professor Jack Balkin summed up the administration's position: "I could tell you why what I'm doing is legal, but then I'd have to shoot you."

As part of the procedure for establishing the "legal" limits of interrogation, last year's Military Commission Act required the president to put in writing his definition of what constitutes "outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment." The executive order that Bush finally issued on July 20 decreed that everything in CIA detention and interrogation programs was legal—even though the secret CIA prison sites scattered around the globe clearly violate the Geneva Conventions, which are binding under U.S. law.

Bush offered a "good intention" definition of non-torture. He stressed that interrogators were prohibited from "intentionally causing serious bodily injury" and "acts intended to denigrate the religion, religious practices, or religious objects of the individual." He banned "willful and outrageous acts of personal abuse done for the purpose of humiliating or degrading the individual in a manner so serious that any reasonable person ... would deem the acts to be beyond the bounds of human decency, such as sexual or sexually indecent acts undertaken for the purpose of humiliation..."

Former Marine Corps Commandant Paul X. Kelley condemned the new guidelines for encouraging abuses: "As



long as the intent of the abuse is to gather intelligence or to prevent future attacks, and the abuse is not 'done for the purpose of humiliating or degrading the individual'—even if that is an inevitable consequence—the president has given the CIA carte blanche to engage in 'willful and outrageous acts of personal abuse.'" Georgetown University law Professor David Cole noted that Bush's order "appears to permit cutting or bruising a suspect so long as the injury does not risk death, significant functional impairment or 'extreme physical pain,' an entirely subjective term."

The key portion of the executive order—the list of approved techniques—was kept secret. Tom Malinowski of Human Rights Watch observed, "All the order really does is to have the president say, 'Everything in that other document that I'm not showing you is legal — trust me.'"

To prevent detainees and former detainees from disclosing to their defense attorneys the specific extreme interrogation methods used against them, the Bush administration is using claims of "state secrets." A Justice Department spokeswoman asserted that letting a former Maryland resident tell his lawyer the methods he suffered would be "inadequate to protect unique and potentially highly classified information that is vital to our country's ability to fight terrorism."

Unfortunately, the Supreme Court appears to be swallowing this argument. On Oct. 9, the Court refused to hear the case of Khaled el-Masri, a German of Lebanese descent who was kidnapped by the CIA during a 2003 vacation in Macedonia. He was stripped, beaten, shackled, and flown to a secret interrogation center in Afghanistan, where he was tortured for four months. The CIA eventually realized that they had the wrong guy, so Masri was flown to Albania and dumped on the side of the road.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice admitted to her that the CIA had mistakenly grabbed Masri. The European Union confirmed Masri's allegations, and the German government issued arrest warrants for 13 CIA agents earlier this year for their role in Masri's kidnapping and torture. Masri's story was all over Europe and he was interviewed by "60 Minutes" and other American media.

Masri sued CIA chief George Tenet, three private aviation companies, and 20 unnamed employees of the CIA and the companies. The ACLU, which represented him, declared that the Supreme Court should not allow the "government to engage in torture, declare it a state secret and ... avoid any judicial accountability."

But the Court accepted the Justice Department's claims and banned Masri from American courtrooms. Apparently, as long as the U.S. government has not publicly confessed, then it is still a "state secret" that U.S. officials committed heinous crimes. (A similar case, involving an innocent Canadian who was seized at JFK International Airport and flown to Syria for torturing, continues to percolate in the U.S. courts.)

In his Oct. 5 statement, Bush declared, "the techniques that we use have been fully disclosed to appropriate members of the United States Congress." But House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Sen. Jay Rockefeller, the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, angrily denied having been informed.

Not that they are doing much about it. Bush continues to benefit from a largely spineless Congress. Michael Ratner, president of the Center for Constitutional Rights, said, "Congress by its actions and inactions is the handmaiden of the torture program. Despite the publicly revealed memos authorizing torture and the testimony of its widespread use, Congress, even under the Democ-

rats, has yet to hold even one hearing regarding the responsibility of high administration officials." Congressional Democrats apparently believe that being criticized by Bush is a fate worse than torture. One exception is Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon, who singlehandedly recently blocked the nomination of John Rizzo, who approved of the administration's extreme definitions of torture, to be the general counsel of the CIA.

The Democrats initially indicated that they would refuse to hold confirmation hearings for Michael Mukasey, Bush's nominee for attorney general, until they received the confidential legal rationales on interrogation policy and other matters. But fearing criticism, Democratic leaders dropped the demand.

There is little reason to expect that Mukasey, if confirmed, will rein in federal torture. According to *Newsweek*, he assured the Bush administration in private meetings that he "understood the need for the CIA to use enhanced interrogation methods" and that he did not support naming a special prosecutor for potential Bush administration crimes. In a 2004 speech, Mukasey declared, "the hidden message in the structure of the Constitution" is that the government is entitled to "the benefit of the doubt." Does he believe government deserves a codified benefit of the doubt, regardless of perpetual misconduct or perfidy?

Still—gutless congressmen and compliant lawyers notwithstanding—the administration's torture policy is under a Damocles Sword. The *New York Times* article caused a far greater splash than the Bush team expected. And if the memos themselves or Bush's secret order to the CIA authorizing torture-like methods leak out, the White House could find itself in far more peril. ■

*James Bovard is the author of Attention Deficit Democracy and eight other books.*

# Putin's Progress

With the end of his presidential term in sight, Russia's leader digs in.

By John Laughland

IS THERE SUCH A THING as Slavophobia? To be sure, not all Slavic nations are vilified in the West, but the recent demonization of the Serbs and the Russians has an especially vicious quality. Perhaps it results from unconscious memories of Dracula myths, which originated in Bohemia, or is simply a carry-over from the Cold War, but when Slavic leaders become unpopular, the Western mind attributes to them the most sinister of motives, as if they were the embodiment of evil itself.

As I prepared to leave for Russia recently, a trip that culminated in a three-hour meeting with Vladimir Putin, people in London warned me—only half-jokingly—not to accept so much as a cup of coffee from the Russian president for fear that it would be laced with polonium-210.

Relations between Russia and the West have declined spectacularly since George W. Bush looked Putin in the eye in Slovenia in 2001 and said he was a man he could trust, and that decline has been especially sharp in relations between Moscow and London. The British capital has become, for anti-Putin oligarch exiles like Boris Berezovsky, what Zurich was for Lenin—a safe haven from which to plot the violent overthrow of the Russian government, which is what Berezovsky has twice said he is doing—and their opinions are treated with reverence in the corridors of Whitehall and the BBC.

The contrast between the image of Putin in the West and Putin in the flesh could hardly be greater. I was part of a

group of Western journalists and academics known as the Valdai Discussion Group, and the Russian president received us for a long afternoon in an enormous conference center erected on the grounds of the presidential villa at Sochi on the Black Sea, where the warm sea air hangs heavy with the fragrance of pine and eucalyptus.

The first thing you notice about Vladimir Putin is his relaxed body language. Often presented as cold and even aggressive, Putin in fact smiles easily and speaks quietly. His eyes are soft, and there is no aura of intimidation around him. During the meeting, he sat forward in his chair, his body taut, speaking intently without notes or prompts from any officials. This was the impressive performance of a professional, not the zeal of a fanatic. Putin's language is often direct, but he is polite and happy for people to argue back. Even the security arrangements around him are astonishingly light.

The second thing you notice about Putin is the language he uses. In the former USSR, much of the vocabulary of political discourse remains unchanged since Soviet times. This is particularly noticeable in the former Soviet republics, and had been, too, in the so-called "Republic of Tartarstan," one of the 85 components of the Russian Federation that we visited at the beginning of our week. Tartarstan's president, Mintimer Shaimiev, is an old Soviet retread who has been in power continuously since 1985 and who rattles off Stakhanovite statistics about milk pro-

duction and harvest yields as he boasts of his republic's five-year plan. But the way in which he and other post-Soviet politicians use phrases such as "our republic," and the way in which local minority languages or dialects are elevated to official status, betray the fact that these political units are artificial creations with little basis in history or even political reality. The USSR tried to create legitimacy by pretending to be not the successor state to the old Tsarist empire but a new kind of ideological enterprise. Today it is no longer *homo sovieticus* that is being promoted but *homo ukrainus* or even *homo tartarus*. The ideology is the same.

The men who govern Russia today no longer speak like this. Although the main party political leaders have remained unchanged since the early 1990s, real power in the Kremlin has shifted under Putin to people who place a high premium on their abilities as managers. Many of them, indeed, are both ministers and bosses of Russia's mega-enterprises. They are studiously non-ideological, and they keep their eyes firmly on the bottom line. Putin was doubtless being teasingly politically incorrect when in our meeting, he heaped praise on the man he had appointed prime minister two days previously, Victor Zubkov, saying that he had been "an excellent Soviet administrator" who had turned an unproductive collective farm into an efficient one. But he added by way of qualification, "Zubkov has never been ideological, only practical. He is very professional."

Lack of ideology is the new Russian ideology, and Putin has a lot to be non-ideological about. In his eight years in power, Russia has gone from being a semi-bankrupt state to having the largest gold reserves in the world and some \$300 billion in foreign currency reserves besides. The Russian state now has more money to invest than the IMF has to lend the rest of the world. Whoever governs Russia after Putin ceases to be president (he has recently indicated that he will run for prime minister himself) will spend vast sums on infrastructure and technology at home and on purchases of foreign companies abroad.

The Putin boom cannot be reduced to oil and gas revenues alone, for it has lifted many sectors and many different regions of this, the largest country in the world. In 2006, Russians bought twice as many cars as Indians who are more than five times more numerous, and the construction industry is growing so fast (50 percent last year) that it is a major logistical challenge to transport the required amounts of concrete.

Putin specifically referred to the abandonment of ideology during his long talk with us. Asked what Russia's role should now be in the world, he replied that neither the Tsarist model of support for Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire nor the Soviet model of support for socialism were remotely appropriate for Russia today. Lenin, he said, had cared nothing for Russia itself but only for the world revolution. Putin spoke firmly as he told us, "I have no wish to see our people, and even less our leadership, seized by missionary ideas. We need to be a country that in every way has a healthy self-respect and can stand up for its interests but a country that is at the same time able to reach agreements and be a convenient partner for all members of the international community."

Putin sees it as his mission to make Russia a normal country. He spoke with firm conviction when he told us why he is so hostile to the death penalty: "It is my conviction that by passing the death sentence on its citizens, even if they are criminals, the state instills cruelty in its citizens and breeds ever new examples of citizens showing cruelty towards each other and towards the state itself." This is something with which every leading European politician would agree.

Later, he said that his goal was to see the party he leads, United Russia, develop as a strong "party of the left with a social democratic component"—again, copper-bottomed European orthodoxy. Putin tirelessly emphasized to us the urgent need for Russia to develop further toward a normal multi-party democracy and to remain politically stable—a need he said was especially important in view of the fact that

say that quite sincerely ... I'm always thinking about how whatever action we might take will affect the actual lives of ordinary people," might be dismissed as banal electioneering. But the message is that he embodies the stability and rootedness of eternal Russia, qualities a country desperately needs as it struggles to repair the damage inflicted by the instability of the Bolsheviks and Boris Yeltsin's catastrophic "shock therapy."

Putin is not alone in cultivating pragmatism. One of his closest allies is Sergei Ivanov, the slim and slick first deputy prime minister of Russia and presidential contender. An old comrade of Putin's from the elite foreign intelligence service, Ivanov even bears a striking physical resemblance to the current president. His English is as immaculate as his suits. I predict a revolution in relations between Moscow and the West if he becomes president.

**PUTIN TIRELESSLY EMPHASIZED TO US THE URGENT NEED FOR RUSSIA TO DEVELOP FURTHER TOWARD A NORMAL MULTI-PARTY DEMOCRACY AND TO REMAIN POLITICALLY STABLE.**

an increasing number of Russians are middle-class property-owners with mortgages.

Apart from economic progress, a theme he returned to constantly, there was another issue on which Putin spoke with particular passion: his own roots. He told us that he had discovered that his family had lived in the same village and gone to the same church since the early 17th century and that he had seen the church archives to prove it. He also recalled the days when he lived in a communal apartment in Leningrad. To say, as he did, "I feel my bond with the country. ... I really care about the problems of the ordinary citizen, and I

But whether it is Ivanov or another man, or even Putin himself as prime minister, who governs Russia after next March—the president's popularity remains extremely high even after eight years in power—it is hard to disagree with one of the leaders of United Russia, Oleg Morozov, who told us very firmly, "Whoever wins the next presidential election can under no circumstances do so by being anti-Putin." Given that the Russians like Putin so much, should we not attempt to do so too—just a little? ■

*Russia: A New Cold War? edited by John Laughland and Michel Korinman will be published in November.*

# Arts & Letters

## FILM

[*Gone Baby Gone*]

### All in the Family

By Steve Sailer

WITH "THE SOPRANOS" wrapped up, there's a general feeling that the Italian mafia has finally been exhausted as grist for movies and TV. What Hollywood needs now is a new favorite crime-prone immigrant group, of which there is no shortage of candidates.

Here in Los Angeles, the more dismal murders—such as one teenager shooting another over graffiti-tagging rights to an alley—are committed mostly by the usual suspects. In contrast, the colorful capers that Quentin Tarantino or the Coen brothers would find cool, the seemingly brilliant schemes that somehow go awry and end in a bloodbath, are perpetrated mostly by white newcomers from either the Middle East or the ex-Soviet Union: Armenians, Israelis, Persians, and the like.

Yet Hollywood seems instead to be falling in love with an ethnic group that has been here even longer than the Italians: the Irish. Working-class white Boston, where killings, while rare, frequently remain unsolved, has been the setting for the recent Oscar-winners "The Departed" and "Mystic River."

Now failed leading man Ben Affleck (perhaps most notorious for bombing in "Pearl Harbor"), who won a screenwriting Oscar a decade ago with his best

friend Matt Damon for their movie about a Boston prole, "Good Will Hunting," has returned to his roots. He has co-adapted and directed "Gone Baby Gone," a detective thriller by *Mystic River* novelist Dennis Lehane set in Boston's grimy Dorchester neighborhood.

Well, Dorchester is not exactly Ben's roots. He was born in Berkeley, California and was raised in Cambridge, which is just like Dorchester, if Dorchester were home to Harvard and MIT. Like Damon and so many other younger stars, Affleck is from the artsy-lefty upper middle class. (The clearest exception to this trend is Dorchester-born ex-thug Mark Wahlberg, who was electrifying in "The Departed.")

This modestly budgeted film noir about neighborhood private eye Patrick Kenzie trying to unravel the kidnapping of the four-year-old daughter of a cocaine-addicted single mom hinges, like "The Maltese Falcon," on the snoop's devotion to his profession's ethics. Affleck's direction is a bit choppy, and the plot eventually becomes either bafflingly complex or nonsensical, but the overall impact is strong. "Gone Baby Gone" is hardly "The Departed," but it's more watchable than "Mystic River."

Affleck assembled a fine cast, with old reliables Morgan Freeman and Ed Harris as the cops. The role of the detective's girlfriend/partner doesn't make much sense (this is the fourth novel in Lehane's series, so presumably their implausible relationship was explained earlier), but it provides Affleck an excuse to point the camera at the most adorable starlet of the moment, Michelle Monaghan.

As the private eye, Affleck cast his own younger brother, making this the

second straight movie starring Casey Affleck that I've reviewed (he also played "the Coward Robert Ford" in "The Assassination of Jesse James"), and that's plenty.

Film-noir detectives have traditionally been world-weary types, such as Humphrey Bogart and Robert Mitchum, but Casey, a small youngster with a pinched baby-face, looks like he's trying detective work because he's not sure he's mature enough yet for law school. Casey is perfectly fine in both films, possibly because he gets a lot of real life practice at the main demand of these roles: acting peeved and perturbed when nobody takes him seriously.

Casey's sister-in-law is actress Jennifer Garner, and his wife's brother is Joaquin Phoenix. Would he be starring in movies without all these connections? Golden Age Hollywood was intensely nepotistic in the executive suites, but the modern industry is more nepotistic in the above-the-line jobs because power has migrated from the head office to whomever is raising the money. Ben Affleck's famous name was responsible for scraping together the \$19 million for "Gone Baby Gone," so he got to cast his baby brother.

Surprisingly, Hollywood nepotism is seldom fatal to films because its beneficiaries, like Casey Affleck, are almost all at least competent. Why? Let's do the numbers. If, say, 1 percent of all adult Americans have the natural talent to be a movie star, director, or screenwriter, and maybe 10 percent of them try to make it in the business, well, that's still 200,000 people to choose among! So, among that qualified 0.1 percent, it's whom you know that counts. ■

Rated R for violence, drug content, and pervasive language.



## BOOKS

[*The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War*, David Halberstam, Hyperion, 736 pages]

# Recalling the Forgotten War

By Walter M. Hudson

THE FIRST YEAR of the Korean War, so terrible and so filled with shattering human error, is the subject of David Halberstam's last book, *The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War*, finished just days before his death in a car crash last April. After that first year of war was over, the great campaigns essentially ended, and the conflict bogged down into World War I-style battles, dragging on painfully for two more years. It was, as Halberstam writes, a war that was puzzling, gray, and distant—seemingly “without hope or resolution.”

Unimportant, however, it was not. And the first year was the most crucial of all—from the summer of 1950, when North Korean T-34 tanks roared across the 38th parallel and sent South Korean and American forces into disarray, to the late spring of 1951, when Douglas MacArthur was relieved of command and returned to a tumultuous homecoming in the United States. It was a year as dramatic and dizzying as any in 20th-century American history: a summer of seemingly unstoppable Communist advance with American and Korean forces desperately falling back and clinging to the Pusan Perimeter; an autumn of triumph with the spectacular turnabout at Inchon, the North Korean army crushed and the United Nations forces hurtling toward the Manchurian border; a winter of overwhelming Chinese counterattack and, again, ignominious American retreat and defeat; and finally, a spring with a climactic show-

down between Commander in Chief Truman and Supreme Far East Commander MacArthur with both the Korean War and Cold War coming into the Main Streets and living rooms of America.

In New Journalist style, of the kind Halberstam used so masterfully in his greatest book, *The Best and the Brightest*, *The Coldest Winter* begins in October 1950, *in medias res*, as it were, with the Eighth Regiment of the U.S. First Cavalry Division at Unsan, north of Pyongyang. MacArthur had landed at Inchon the month before, routed and effectively knocked North Korea's army out of action, and was, with permission from Washington, rushing toward the Yalu with the goal of unifying all of Korea.

Americans at home were elated—assured of total victory—supplies were already being rerouted to Europe, and there was much talk about the boys being home for Christmas. But the soldiers themselves were wary. They were in unknown, harsh country, and rumors and fragmentary intelligence indicated that huge Chinese armies were hidden in the mountainous terrain. At Unsan, a small part of those forces struck, and the Eighth Regiment was badly mauled and nearly overrun. Eight hundred of the 2,400 men in the regiment were casualties.

But what makes the story even more incredible is what happened after Unsan. The Chinese attacked, then vanished once more. A more obvious warning could not have been made: hundreds of thousands of Chinese had already crossed over the Yalu River and were poised to strike the overconfident, overextended UN. But despite all the warnings, despite the growing obviousness of disaster, the United Nations forces kept on going, moving their strung-out units toward the Chinese border, daring Mao and tempting fate—a bet, as Halberstam notes, not a strategy. Indeed, he calls it a kind of “madness,” but not all blame can be put on MacArthur. It was a collective irrationality, the weakness of many men of power

that allowed this to happen, that plunged the United States into military disaster and the subsequent Truman-MacArthur feud, the closest thing to a military-political crisis America has had since the Civil War. It was an example, after all, of human choice and agency, not impersonal forces.

Halberstam has taught us before, wisely and well. *The Best and the Brightest* was a ferocious demolition of Kennedy's New Frontiersmen. The Whiz Kids, the “Harvards,” were, as he finally called McNamara, fools. Halberstam laid them bare: trapped by the crisis psychology of the Cold War—but more importantly, by their own egos and weaknesses—these apparently high-minded men (liberals virtually all) steadily, consciously, willingly immersed America in the Vietnam debacle.

Older, wiser, less impassioned in *The Coldest Winter*, Halberstam does not quite as ruthlessly flay the men who led American politics and arms in 1950-51. Less language like “brainwashing” and “lies” here: one gets the feeling that even the weakest and most foolish men in this book are somehow better, more open and outright even in their flaws than the dissembling intellectuals of Camelot. The message in Halberstam's last book is the same: character is still destiny, even when events seemingly ride mankind.

And what character studies Halberstam gives us in *The Coldest Winter*, page after page of them: whole subchapters devoted to MacArthur's father and mother (appropriate for a man of such Shakespearian complexity); telling episodes of Kim Il Sung and Syngman Rhee's youthful days, revealing the origins of resentment pent up for years; scathing passages about the pettiness and bigotry of even lesser figures, such as Edward (Ned) Almond, one of MacArthur's corps commanders. Human agency, in weakness, is everywhere. But so is human fortitude and, ever so rarely, genius: Halberstam rightfully credits Gen. Walton Walker's dogged stand at the Pusan Perimeter in the late summer of 1950, MacArthur's imagination and

daring in conceiving and executing Inchon, and Gen. Matthew Ridgway's adamantine will in turning the tide in 1951 and stopping the Chinese counteroffensive.

And what portrayals of the American soldiers in the foxholes, enduring, killing, and dying through it all. (Americanocentric, admittedly, it is; the Korean soldiers and people in the book are largely ciphers.) What Halberstam left out of *The Best and the Brightest*, for all its magnificent fury, were the consequences of the machinations of the McNamaras, Bundys, and Rostows. But he presents here military history at the spear point: the terrible confusion during the retreat to Pusan, the whirlwind victory at Inchon, and the terrible ordeal of the winter of '50 and '51.

We meet men such as Bruce Ritter, who in the agonizing retreat after the Chinese counterattack, carried away a dying man—even though it was hopeless

and knowing that he would probably die doing so—because it was the right thing to do. And throughout the book there are fantastic, terrifying scenes of torch-lit waves of Chinese soldiers, of near and actual Thermopylaes with whole units being immolated, sometimes for terrible but understandable reasons and other times for the vanities and weaknesses of the men who led them.

It would be hard to understand, much less partially absolve, the leaders on high for their tragic mistakes, were it not for their human frailties. And again, Halberstam's approach is crucial: we may forget, for example, how physically worn down Douglas MacArthur was by then (as noted by many around him)—an old and sometimes forgetful man at 70; how even George Marshall, then secretary of defense and the one man who could have somehow averted the disaster at the Yalu, was also an old man, exhausted by wartime exertions and peacetime efforts and unable to muster the strength to protest forcefully.

This personalization of history no doubt annoys some academics who probably consider Halberstam only a slightly better, more thoughtful Bob Woodward. But in the diverse panorama of characters in his study, Halberstam shows us how subtle and tricky the Korean War in particular, and the Cold War in general, really was. Against the leftist historians, why yes, of course, Stalin knew of and approved of Kim Il Sung's invasion; yes, of course, Kim, coddled and bankrolled by the Soviets, felt that he owed Stalin and the USSR, as Halberstam puts it, "big time." Against the right-wing conspiratorialists, no, Stalin did not order or direct the invasion; no, there was no masterminding from a worldwide HQ in Moscow.

Indeed, the Korean War was a war more about basic human failings and less about the self-evident stupidities of Marxism than we knew. Both Kim and his counterpart Rhee were nationalists—and proud, resentful, ambitious, and egomaniacal. They wanted to unify the country under their respective

thumbs on their own terms. (Rhee probably would have invaded northward given half a chance.) And when conflict broke out fully in 1950, human failings magnified, and human errors, as they always do in wartime, abounded.

Again and again, we see men taking counsel of their fears. A moral paralysis gripped Washington throughout 1950-51: Truman's fear of calling the Korean War a "war" (and forever bequeathing us the Orwellian term "police action"), Washington's fear of challenging MacArthur, fear of relieving MacArthur, fear of (on the Democrat side) being seen as soft of Communism, fear of (on the Republican side) losing a chance to take back power from the Democrats in the upcoming elections. Even the reckless gambit to the Yalu was essentially a study in moral cowardice. Halberstam quotes Acheson, as the armies rushed ahead to disaster: "We sat around like paralyzed rabbits."

Thankfully, Halberstam only once draws historical analogies to Vietnam and Iraq. History may teach lessons, but they are lessons woven into the texture of life's experiences. Some comparisons are always necessary, but if too extensive, they are nearly always ham-fisted, and such analogies tend to turn history into a form of apologetics: we have our own beliefs and those historical examples are dragged out to help us justify them. What Halberstam does, more importantly, is to shed further light on what we increasingly are discovering about the Cold War: that someone like George Kennan was more right than his critics and that what drove much of what we thought was the Cold War was not so much ideological as basic geopolitics: the hubris of victory, the fear of humiliation, and the intoxication of power.

*The Coldest Winter* is indeed a companion, as Russell Baker notes in his afterword, to *The Best and the Brightest*, and a superb one at that. ■

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[*A War Like No Other: The Truth About China's Challenge to America*, Richard C. Bush and Michael E. O'Hanlon, John Wiley and Sons, 232 pages]

## Taiwanese Linchpin

By Ted Galen Carpenter

IN RECENT YEARS, most writers who deal with U.S. policy toward China fall into two distinct camps: panda huggers and panda sluggers. Members of the first faction rave about the growing trade ties between China and the United States and assert with a confidence bordering on certainty that economic progress in China will soon lead to political liberalization and the eventual emergence of a full-blown democracy. The panda sluggers, by contrast, view China as a 21st-century version of Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union—an odious totalitarian power that is fast becoming a strategic adversary and mortal threat to America.

Brookings Institution scholars Richard C. Bush and Michael E. O'Hanlon are refreshing exceptions to the tendency to view China in such extreme terms. In *A War Like No Other: The Truth About China's Challenge to America*, the analysts make a serious attempt to capture the complexities and nuances of Washington's crucial relationship with the rising economic giant and possible military competitor. They are clearly worried about some aspects of Beijing's behavior, yet they also conclude that China's rise as a great power is "much less destabilizing than Germany's or Japan's in the first half of the twentieth century."

Despite such balanced treatment, *A War Like No Other* is ultimately a disappointment. It could have—and should have—been so much more than it turned out to be.

For a book that purports to examine the overall challenge China poses to the United States, several topics get short shrift. For example, Beijing's role in cre-

ating the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a strong security partnership linking China to Russia and various Central Asian countries, receives only two passing mentions. Yet the SCO has not only conducted joint military exercises, it has openly advocated excluding the influence of "outside powers" (i.e. the United States) from Central Asia.

Likewise, Beijing has been less than helpful in dealing with the Iranian nuclear crisis. A fairly consistent pattern has emerged. The United States and its European allies keep pushing for stronger economic sanctions against Tehran, while China (together with Russia) opposes such coercive measures and works to dilute any sanctions that are ultimately imposed. China has been only marginally more helpful in dealing with North Korea. Yet the authors say relatively little about this behavior and what it portends for Beijing's role in the international system.

The mounting resource competition between China and the United States, especially over oil, also receives little analysis from Bush and O'Hanlon. This is strange, given the growing agitation in Washington over China's extensive ties to key oil producers from the Persian Gulf to Africa to Latin America. Even the oil-rich Spratly Islands in the South China Sea, the centerpiece of a massive territorial claim by Beijing, receive only brief mention, though the Spratlys could become a focal point of tension between the U.S. and China. In addition to their probable oil resources, the islands stand astride key sea lanes. To put it mildly, Washington is not inclined to recognize Beijing's bold claims to virtually the entire South China Sea, which would give China control over sea lanes that are crucial to Japan and other key American allies and clients in East Asia.

Even the treatment of the large and vibrant U.S.-China trade relationship is rather meager. In particular, China's emergence as the second largest holder of U.S. treasury debt—and probably the largest holder within the next three or four years—should have been the subject of more analysis. It will become

increasingly difficult for Washington to take a strong position on trade or strategic disputes with China when it means angering America's chief banker.

Despite its broad title, the bulk of *A War Like No Other* is really about whether the Taiwan issue could ultimately lead to a conflict between China and the United States. Perhaps this shouldn't be too surprising, since Richard Bush was once the head of the American Institute in Taiwan—Washington's *de facto* embassy in Taipei.

To their credit, Bush and O'Hanlon recognize that the volatile Taiwan issue is the one factor in the overall U.S.-China relationship that could ignite a full-scale war. Other areas of disagreement seem manageable, in their judgment: "Most hypothetical causes of war between the United States and China turn out, upon inspection, to have little or no basis. The two countries will not duke it out simply to settle the question of who will 'run the world' in the twenty-first century." They note correctly that China and the United States need each other for economic prosperity.

The Taiwan issue, though, is a dark cloud on the horizon. They argue, "Even if the chances of war between the United States and China are less than 25 percent—indeed, even if they are less than 10 percent—they are far from zero." Bush and O'Hanlon not only fret about the danger of armed conflict over Taiwan, they understand that a war is more likely to arise because of blunders and misunderstandings than any ruthless Chinese desire for conquest.

Even so, the authors actually underestimate the risk of a Sino-American war over Taiwan. Developments in both Taiwan and mainland China (some of which have occurred since publication of the book) are increasingly alarming. Although the extensive economic ties between China and Taiwan should induce prudent behavior on both sides, that has not done so—especially on the part of Taipei. Indeed, the sense of Taiwanese nationalism and a distinct, assertive Taiwanese identity has grown even as the economic linkages have expanded.

A growing number of Taiwanese advocate changing the name of the country from the Republic of China—established when Chiang Kai-shek's government fled the mainland following its defeat in the 1949 civil war—to the Republic of Taiwan. The current government is engaged in a concerted de-Sinification campaign in everything from the educational curriculum to the names of state-owned corporations. Beijing, which insists that Taiwan is rightfully part of China, issues ever more pointed warnings that pro-independence forces on Taiwan are dangerously close to crossing bright red lines that will require a harsh Chinese response.

For its part, the United States urges both Taipei and Beijing to avoid any actions that would disrupt the status quo. The problem with such calls for restraint is that the three capitals have very different concepts in mind when they speak of the status quo.

American officials mean a willingness by all parties to tolerate indefinitely Taiwan's ambiguous political status. In other words, the island should continue to enjoy its *de facto* independence (but not internationally recognized legal independence) until Taipei and Beijing can agree on a peaceful resolution of the dispute. This rationale enables Washington to acknowledge Beijing's position that there is only one China and that Taiwan is part of China while continuing to sell arms to Taiwan and maintain an implicit commitment to defend the island against a Chinese assault. Taiwan's attempts to push the envelope regarding independence are considered troublesome and undesirable, but so, too, is any attempt by China to compel reunification. That is why the United States has explicitly admonished both capitals about their behavior.

China has a radically different definition of the status quo. For Beijing, it is a synonym for a one-China policy and Taiwan's eventual reunification with the mainland. Anything that challenges the concept of one China is, therefore, an unacceptable attempt to alter the status quo. Thus, from the perspective of Chinese leaders, the anti-secession law that

the National People's Congress passed in early 2005—which threatened to use military force against Taiwan under certain circumstances—was not disruptive; it merely re-emphasized the only acceptable political outcome: reunification. Conversely, even Taiwan's mildest actions to gain international diplomatic recognition—Taipei's recent applications for membership in the World Health Organization and the United Nations General Assembly, for example—are a threat to the status quo and must be resisted at all costs.

Taiwan's concept is the opposite of China's. Taiwanese officials routinely argue that the status quo means Taiwan as a sovereign state. They point out that the Republic of China has been in existence since 1912 and is recognized by many countries in the world (at present, 24 mostly small nations that Taipei has bribed). Reunification with China, according to Taipei, is only one possible outcome among many to be negotiated by the governments of two independent and equal states. From Taiwan's perspective, Beijing's anti-secession law and the increasing deployment of missiles (now numbering more than 1,000) aimed at the island are aggressive attempts to alter the status quo, whereas Taiwanese efforts to secure international recognition are consistent with it.

Unfortunately, Beijing, Taipei, and Washington are simply talking past one another. Serious diplomatic quarrels and even armed conflicts have begun over less significant misunderstandings.

Bush and O'Hanlon only partially comprehend the gravity of the situation: "We think that policymakers have generally handled the Taiwan and China problem reasonably well over the past quarter century, and expect that they will continue to do so." They add that the "core of U.S. policy is basically correct." That policy, in their view, is one of "dual deterrence"—maintaining the implicit commitment to protect Taiwan from coercion by China while pressing the Taiwanese not to provoke Beijing. Other scholars have described it as "strategic ambiguity."

The logic of strategic ambiguity is that the Taiwanese will remain uncertain

about the extent of U.S. protection—especially if Taipei engages in provocative conduct. Conversely, Beijing will believe that using military force against the island is too risky because the United States would probably intervene. Supposedly, this mutual uncertainty should lead to caution and restraint on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

The chief problem with this policy is that it assumes both governments will interpret Washington's posture in exactly the way American officials desire. Unfortunately, events suggest that the precise opposite is occurring. The Taiwanese seem increasingly confident that the United States would never abandon a fellow democracy. At the same time, China seems ever more skeptical that the United States would disrupt the entire global economy and risk war with a nuclear power just to back a small, upstart secessionist island. These developments are a warning bell in the night about the danger of miscalculation.

Bush and O'Hanlon do not really come to grips with this problem. Instead, they largely repackage the conventional wisdom regarding Taiwan policy. They believe that with a few tactical tweaks, such as urging China to give Taiwan a little more international space, the United States can maintain the status quo indefinitely. That is a dangerously complacent attitude. The risk is increasing that America will be dragged into a conflict between Taiwan and China, unless Washington makes a radical policy change to extricate itself from that quarrel.

Ultimately, *A War Like No Other* is modestly useful, but most of its insights are not especially original, its policy prescriptions even less so. Anyone hoping for a breakthrough book on the complex, delicate, and critically important relationship between the U.S. and China will have to wait. ■

*Ted Galen Carpenter, vice president for defense and foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute, is the author of seven books on international affairs, including America's Coming War with China: A Collision Course over Taiwan.*



## MUSIC

[ *Magic* ]

# The Boss Is Back

By A.G. Gancarski

WHEN MOST POP STARS have an album to promote, they dutifully go to the expected outlets, like MTV's "Total Request Live." But Bruce Springsteen is no ordinary pop star. He's a cultural institution, and it seemed natural that promotion for his new chart-topping and critically acclaimed album, "Magic," saw him interviewed not on some tawdry MTV showcase of ephemerality but on CBS's "60 Minutes."

Predictably, Springsteen's outspoken comments on the Sunday night news show made headlines. A few days before the episode aired, the Drudge Report ran a "flash" spotlighting of some of the Boss's most provocative political comments on what was then the upcoming show.

In response to charges that Springsteen's criticism of certain extralegal tactics of the war on terror somehow made him "unpatriotic," the rocker maintained that such claims were "just the language of the day ... the *modus operandi* for anybody who doesn't like somebody ... criticizing where we've been or where we're going. I believe every citizen has a stake in the ... direction of their country. That's why we vote... It's unpatriotic at any given moment to sit back and let things pass that are damaging to some place that you love so dearly and that has given me so much."

Springsteen elaborated further on his problems with the foreign-policy missteps of the current administration: "I think we've seen things happen over the past six years that I don't think anybody ever thought they'd ever see in the United States. When people think of the United States' identity, they don't think

of torture. They don't think of illegal wiretapping. They don't think of voter suppression. They don't think of no habeas corpus. ... Those are things that are anti-American. There's been a whole series of things that ... I never thought I'd ever see in America."

For those who still insist that "9/11 changed everything," that entertainers are forever obliged to "support the troops" Toby Keith style and avoid making politically charged statements, Springsteen's nationally televised criticisms of the Bush administration were apparently too much to bear. FoxNews talking head Bill O'Reilly, along with some chick who routinely appears on his show to "analyze body language," took Springsteen to task twice within the span of a week for being a "very liberal guy" who lacks an ability to "back up his opinions with facts."

"Violations of habeas corpus, Bruce? When and where? Attack on the Constitution? How so? Now we've invited the singer on this program to explain, but of course, he declined, perhaps understanding that his words have consequences," O'Reilly claimed in his usual blowhard manner, adding, "if he couldn't prove his points, he would be held accountable right here. Pop stars, as you know, are rarely held accountable."

What O'Reilly seemingly doesn't understand, or more likely, refuses to concede for the sake of his own self-aggrandizement, is that Bruce Springsteen doesn't need him to prove his bona fides or to hold him "accountable." Springsteen is arguably the most gifted singer-songwriter—not to mention best live performer—of his generation, and today, not far from his 60th birthday, he is as relevant as ever, saying things that many other "pop stars" wouldn't dare say for fear of losing their recording contracts or "heavy rotation" status.

Springsteen's willingness to risk media opprobrium and speak out on these issues commends him, and the new album—aptly titled "Magic"—is proof positive that, even as he reaches the end of his career, he hasn't lost much as a singer, a lyricist, or a front man.

Indeed, like Bob Dylan, he's one of the few stadium-fillers who have managed to rock into their golden years.

The album starts off strong, with the hard-rocking "Radio Nowhere," a song that manages to at once critique the vapidness of American radio and the poignancy of lost love. "I was spinnin' 'round a dead dial / Just another lost number in a file. ... Just searchin' for a world with some soul," Springsteen sings, setting the tone for an album that at once wrestles with issues of morality, spirituality, and the thoroughly vitiated American Dream. The melody, meanwhile, is oddly reminiscent of the early '80s Tommy Tutone classic "867-5309," a condition that comes attendant with a certain cognitive dissonance, at least for this writer.

The second track, a mid-tempo rocker entitled, "You'll Be Comin' Down," is somewhat repetitive lyrically, but contains one of the album's most trenchant couplets: "Like a thief on a Sunday morning / It all falls apart with no warning." Like so much of this album, "You'll Be Comin' Down" serves as a eulogy for an America that might never have really existed, but almost certainly has no chance of existing in the current context of no-win wars and a collapsing currency.

"Livin' In the Future," like the rest of the disc, spotlights Springsteen's apparent inability to type out gerunds without apostrophe endings. More importantly, though, it's the first song on the album with explicit political allusions. "Woke up Election Day / Skies Gunpowder and shades of gray / Beneath a dirty sun, I whistled my time away," sings the Boss. Later in the song, he bemoans his spiritual condition, debauched because of his apparent inability to take righteous action: "My faith's been torn asunder / Tell me is that rollin' thunder / Or just the sinkin' sound / Of somethin' righteous goin' under." Much of Springsteen's career, of course, has covered similar territory—as he said on "60 Minutes," his music, to a large degree, allows him to express the disappointments his father and his father's generation experi-

enced. "When I want to write, I put on my father's clothes," he said on the Sunday show.

Track 4, "Your Own Worst Enemy," proves that the old man still listens to contemporary music: the melody is lifted straight from Magnetic Fields' haunting "Born On A Train." The strongest lyrics in the song come at the very end: "Everything is falling down / Your own worst enemy has come to town / Your flag it flew so high / It drifted into the sky." Like so much of the rest of the album, the lyrics here indicate Springsteen's disgust with the sort of flag-pin ersatz patriotism that characterized the run-up to the Iraq War. As a lyricist, Springsteen is obsessed with the concept that "ideas have consequences." Phony patriotism to him is like any other false love—a travesty, a sham, and a sell out.

Tracks 5 and 6, "Gypsy Biker" and "Girls in Their Summer Clothes," both maintain a radio-friendly tempo, with lyrics respectively evoking Johnny Cash's anthemic "Sunday Mornin' Coming Down"—"I'm out countin' white lines / countin' white lines and getting stoned"—and T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song Of J. Alfred Prufrock"—"And the girls in their summer clothes / In the cool of the evening light / The girls in their summer clothes / pass me by."

"I'll Work For Your Love," the seventh track on the album, has a certain debt to late-period Leonard Cohen, with allusions to Christ's crown of thorns, the Stations of the Cross, and "the dust of civilizations." Like so many Springsteen songs, it has numerous layers of meaning. Superficially, it just seems like another love song with jangly guitars and harmonica bars. But when Springsteen sings of how "our city of peace has crumbled" and "our book of faith's been tossed," it's abundantly clear that in Springsteen's universe there are no simple love songs. Everything must be seen in the larger context—one in which humanity's stated lofty ideals are rarely matched by reality.

Track 8, the hauntingly low-key, two-verse ballad "Magic," serves as a sort of transitional piece. Its closing couplet—

"There's bodies hangin' in the trees / This is what will be, this is what will be"—sets the tone nicely for the next song, the widely quoted "Last To Die," in which the singer channels the voices of so many who have opposed the Iraq War, asking "Whose blood will spill, whose heart will break? / Who'll be the last to die for a mistake?"

Springsteen isn't the first popular artist to write a song criticizing our current slate of foreign wars. Green Day's "Wake Me When September Ends," about lovers being separated when one is sent to Iraq to defend American geopolitical prerogatives, may have been the pop-punk band's finest hour. That said, the willingness of Springsteen to address these themes suggests that the country at large is realizing that foreign adventurism comes with a very real price: the dissolution of relationships and the early end of lives because "the wise men were all fools."

The album closes with a stripped-down, string-filled ballad, "Devil's Arcade," which may contain the strongest verse on the whole disc:

You said heroes are needed, so  
heroes get made  
Somebody made a bet, somebody  
paid  
The cool desert morning, then  
nothin' to save  
Just metal and plastic where your  
body caved  
The slow games of poker with  
Lieutenant Ray  
In the ward with the blue walls, a  
sea with no name  
Where you lie adrift with the  
heroes  
Of the devil's arcade.

This album has to be considered one of Springsteen's best. Only 1982's "Nebraska" is better to my ears. But unlike that album, this one is directly relevant to the contemporary situation—evidence of a dialogue the aging Springsteen seems intent upon engaging in with the generations who came after him, many of whom are wrecking their lives here or dying for foreign-policy

missteps 10,000 miles from where they were born. While some might say his is a quixotic quest—after all, the "kids" seem to prefer flash-in-the-pan rappers to grizzled rockers—he should be given credit for trying to impart his hard-won wisdom.

In that sense, "Magic"—like his post 9/11 album "The Rising"—is a fitting companion to the music Springsteen made in his biological prime, as well as to the strongest music of Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, and Woody Guthrie. Is he "liberal," as O'Reilly put it? That claim is only valid if one accepts the Fox talker's definition of "liberalism" as staunchly opposing the civil-liberties rollbacks that are part and parcel of the terror war.

Meanwhile, when I listen to this album, I'm reminded of Leonard Cohen's lyrics from "Democracy":

I'm sentimental, if you know what  
I mean  
I love the country but I can't stand  
the scene.  
And I'm neither left or right  
I'm just staying home tonight,  
getting lost in that hopeless little  
screen.  
But I'm stubborn as those garbage  
bags  
that Time cannot decay,  
I'm junk but I'm still holding up  
this little wild bouquet:  
Democracy is coming to the U.S.A.

Whether democracy, such as it is, is actually coming to the U.S.A. is still very much up for debate. But the uncompromising late-period music of Springsteen suggests that there is still an audience for the sort of authentic populism he puts forth. If history is any guide, some political action—a real movement for change in the American modality—is not too far away. Springsteen's "Magic," just like his most resonant albums over the last few decades, stands as both a reading of the *zeitgeist* and a clarion call for real change in how the United States government does business. ■

A.G. Gancarski writes from Jacksonville, Fla.

# Dust in the Wind

I was reading in the upstairs bedroom when an angry whine came, high in pitch, rising and falling, that set my nerves on edge. It was a hornet, or something of the

ilk, that had wandered in through the patio door. It was looking for a way out.

The beast was fast, very fast. Outrunning it, should it prove to be of ill temper, would be impossible. Such dragons are well-armed. I knew, having stepped on one barefoot as a boy.

Watching it skim along a window, not understanding glass, I wondered whether we really know in which world we live. We might not like it if we did.

I have looked a hornet in the face. (When I was 8, I had a microscope and looked at everything.) They are horrors—strong, quick, conscienceless, with nightmarish eyes. We see them as just bugs only because of our size. If we lived at their scale, they would not be just bugs.

People rush about, writing reports and building airliners, and it all seems very important. We seem very important. Why, one might ask, and to whom or what? Around us, even in cities, a vast and intricate dance of creatures we hardly see goes on. It has gone on for hundreds of millions of years and may go on for as long again. We are not the only game in town.

On the rocky hills behind our house, cows graze. Iridescent green dung beetles congregate on their droppings. In pairs they roll perfect balls and then set off across the land, standing on their heads and pushing the balls with their hind legs. Where they go, I don't know. I don't have to. They seem to have it under control. They don't know I exist, and probably wouldn't be interested. They have other fish to fry.

I think we overestimate our centrality. We are new kids on the block, and maybe too full of ourselves. The world

hums with trillions of lives we don't know whose view of things we can't imagine—the infinitely variegated, clicking little monsters in any garden, strange worms around smoking volcanic vents in the night of the deep oceans, all manner of things. We reduce them to the fourth-grade simplicity of nature shows on television.

I am reminded of J.B.S. Holdane's comment: "My own suspicion is that the universe is not only queerer than we suppose, but queerer than we *can* suppose." Just so. We seem more intelligent than things around us and so think our race the culmination of everything. Clearly, all of this vast universe is here only to spit us up on the cosmic beach. And of course an academic with an IQ of

I THINK WE OVERESTIMATE OUR CENTRALITY. WE ARE **NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK**, AND MAYBE **TOO FULL OF OURSELVES**. THE WORLD HUMS WITH TRILLIONS OF LIVES WE DON'T KNOW WHOSE VIEW OF **THINGS WE CAN'T IMAGINE**.

180, smarter than those around him, can think that he must be the culmination of the culmination. Surely, he has a handle on the web of being, of life, of the stars in their orbits.

But perhaps he is only more complexly confused.

We have in our house a street puppy we adopted, La Coyotita. The Mexicans say she has a lot of coyote blood. I can believe it. She is the color of the hills, with long loping legs, quick curiosity about everything, and a powerful jaw suggesting that she may have descended

from an alligator. She's friendly enough, but there is a wildness in her that doesn't go away.

In what world must she live? Her kind are perfectly comfortable in the rough mountains at night, trotting easily where I stumble cautiously, unable to see. She can run a rabbit down if need be and has ears and nose that must make this seem a different place. She belongs in the world as we do not. Hers, to me anyway, is an enviable independence.

Our other pup is a floppy-eared pooch who needs us. The Coyotita, all fangs and self-reliance, doesn't.

The fashion is to think of coyotes and dung beetles in 19th-century terms of adaptation and fitness. Maybe. People seem to crave overarching explanations, whether they quite make sense or not. For many it is not easy to stare into the abyss and say, "I don't know," or "Something is going on here that is above my pay grade."

So we invent stories, God or gods, evolution, the earth is a great ball balanced on the back of a turtle. If the facts (whatever that means) do not always fit, we shoehorn them, because any faith is better than none at all.

I suppose there's no harm in it. Still, I'll wager that we understand this place only as a goldfish understands its tank. I think it was Chesterton who said you could go mad trying to fit the limitless world into a limited mind. Better to float on the sea of things and enjoy the curiousness and mystery. ■

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